



Bare Necessities for a Man of Style



MAPPIN & WEBB



For a copy of our new Gift Catalogue please call 0800 289275

LONDON GUILDFORD BIRMINGHAM MANCHESTER EDINBURGH
GLASGOW THE GLENEAGLES HOTEL HEATHROW AIRPORT (T3 & 4)

inside

George Clinton page 22

16 Steve Williamson

Will Montgomery keeps time with the born again saxophonist

18 :zoviet*france:

Phil England enters the twilight world of the Industrial culture legends

20 Hans Peter Kuhn

Robert Clark meditates on organised noise with the German sound designer

22 George Clinton

Ben Watson trades shaggy dog stories with the P-Funk conspiracy theorist

26 Electronic Music Pioneers

Mark Sinker travels back in time to the dawn of electronic instruments

34 Brian Eno

Paul Schütze goes head to head with the Ambient world's very own Renaissance Man

40 Martin Rev

Edwin Pouncey makes a Suicide pact on the phone to New York

42 Beijing Rockers

Steven Schwankert takes the long march through China's rock 'n' roll underground

Theremin page 26

regulars

4 Letters

Homophobia in pop, Ambient notors, Penman versus Zappa (the continuing saga)

6 Sounding Off

Live events, happenings, music on TV and radio in September

10 Global Ear: San Francisco

Paying homage at the church of St John Coltrane

12 Bites

Skiab, Locust, The Rootsman, Jonathan Harvey, Dead C, Ken Vandermark

46 Charts

Playlists from the outer reaches of planet sound

53 Subscribe

And blag a FREE copy of Axiom Funk's *Funkronomicon*

74 David Toop

A brief history of sampling

Brian Eno page 34

reviews

47 Soundcheck

September's CDs and albums — reviewed, revered, reviled

70 Print Run

New music books. Satie remembered, women in pop, samizdat: HipHop writing

73 Multimedia

Weaving around the Web with Obsolete's digital nomads

Martin Rev page 40



Issue 139 September 1995
\$2 US \$5.50 ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231)

45-46 Poland Street - London W1V 3DF - UK
Tel: 0171 439 8422 - Fax: 0171 282 4782
e-mail: the.wire@ukonline.co.uk

Publisher: **Adrian Taron**
Publisher's Assistant: **Vanessa Smith**
Advertising: **Tel: 0171 494 1340**
Editor: **Tony Harrison**
Deputy Editor: **Rub Yezag**
Art Editor: **Robin Hewes**

Administrator: **Roshmi Khamari**
Subscriptions: **Ben House 0171 734 3555**

Founder: **Anthony Wood**
Chairman of the Namara Group: **Naim Attallah**

Contributors: **Sylvester Balsevard, John Barnes, Mike Barnes, Clive Bell, Chris Blackford, Linton Chinnich, John Connolly, Richard Cook, John Cowart, Peter Culshaw, Phil England, Kevine Esham, Mark Exton, Matt Fytche, Lesley Gray, Andy Hamilton, Steve Heltje, Simon Hopton, David Iles, Rahma Khanam, Nick Kimberley, Rite Kopf, Art Lange, David Leitch, Rowand Mandel, K Martin, Peter McIntyre, Will Montgomery, Brian Morton, Ian Penman, Edwin Penney, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Jonathan Romney, Paul Schizze, Richard Scott, Peter Shapiro, Mark Siskew, Paul Stamp, Jelle Tarsus, David Toop, John L. Walters, Ben Watson, Barry Witherden, Robert Yates**

Distribution

UK & Europe

UWD
16-18 Tabernacle St
London EC2A 4BN
Tel: 0171 638 4666
Fax: 0171 638 4665

USA

Eastern News Distributors
250 West 55th Street
New York, NY 10019, US
Tel: (212) 619 4484
USA newspaper queries call Toll Free 1800 221 3148

Printed by St Ives PLC

The Wire is a member of the Namara Group (Chairman: Naim Attallah). It is published 12 times per year by The Wire Magazine Ltd. 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF. Tel: 0171 439 8422. Fax: 0171 282 4782. USA Subscriptions: \$50 per annum. 2nd Class postage is paid at Hackensack NJ 07601. Postmaster: Please send address changes to The Wire (Royal Mail International) c/o Yellowstone International, 2375 Pratt Boulevard, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-5937, USA.

Special thanks this issue to Joy Lewis, Peter Narmook and Edw Pouncey
Cover photograph by Brian Eno **Dean Baker**

No notices received in the first or last issue of the magazine and/or not returned during the magazine or its call. No other notices or correspondence should be sent to the magazine. Send all correspondence, including notices of subscription, to the publisher. Copyright 1995 by the publisher. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form is prohibited, and/or in part.

FREE 17 track CD
with the October issue of **The Wire**
(See page 66 for full details)

Plus all the (un)usual, finger-burning pages of features, interviews, CD reviews, books, multimedia, live events, free offers and more.

On sale Tuesday 29 September

letters

Queer business

I had (fondly? Naively?) assumed that issue 137 would be awash with angered responses to Ian Penman's alarmingly crass and worryingly obsessive review of *The Faber Book of Pop* (The Wire 136), but there were none to be found. Hence, weary as I am of yet again having to try to slap some sense into the obtuse and blinkered head of a heterosexual man, can I make a few brief points?

1) Penman gripes that the book puts forward one version of pop rather than displaying any kind of objectivity — this seems an odd comment coming from one of the most subjective critics (often entertainingly so) I've ever read. And is there anything more dreary than 'balance'? Or is Penman just some that he didn't get to flout his take?

2) His list of what's missing from the book focuses on the black artists and genres omitted, yet he himself erases co-editor Hanif Kureishi from the review — a contradiction he seems unaware of due to the overriding, salivating urgency of his need to launch an extensive, abusive ad regimen attack on Jon Savage.

3) There is no such thing as 'heterophobia', until, that is, the happy day when straight people are a persecuted minority (hard of a *Plover* Of The Apes fantasy I have from time to time — is Ian Penman beefy enough for the Charlton Heston role?).

4) Homophobia, conversely, is alive and well and living in the steamy entrails of Penman's word processor. If he doesn't like queers, that's his problem, but for *The Wire* to indulge his hang-ups by letting him trot out the clichés that pepper his article (gay men are sex-obsessed, trivial, infantilised, misogynistic) is a gross disappointment. As for his use of the word 'sweatmen', can I say how thrilling it is to know the sport

of Dick Emery is alive and well, and also to wonder when you'll be printing a piece on a black musician that prints his pieces as full of 'dem' and 'dere'?

5) Disco isn't gay music, oh really? Leaving aside the facts that the piece on Sylvester Penman mentions is one of the most inspirational pieces of writing I've ever been privileged to read, and that the novel he dismisses (*Dancer From The Dance*) is to many of us one of the great gay novels of the century, if there was one genre that we could claim as primarily ours, then surely disco is it? Penman might care to converse with fellow Wire writer, and fellow heterosexual, Peter Shapiro on this (I write as the former supervisor of Peter's dissertation, as well as Scandalised of Brighton).

6) Whether Penman likes it or not, the story of mainstream British pop is a story in which queers are unshakeably central. The only way to ignore the fact is to rubbish it as 'sociology' and hide in that rarefied formalism of abstruse quasi-musicology which has increasingly been Penman's stock in trade (but even in that hidey-hole he needs to acknowledge that a) Barney Hoskyns does it better, and b) Roland Barthes, the source of much of this kind of writing, was so queer as to make me and Jon Savage look straight).

7) Incidentally, when does Penman's homophobia date from? Those of us with long memories can remember when he was more than happy to borrow the clothes of camp in order to fill the *NME* with unduly lengthy diatribes extolling Grace Jones and Kid Creole (such butch acts).

8) Penman's piece does have one useful side-effect, in that it crystallises my one major dissatisfaction with *The Wire* — what might be called its heterosexual modernism. Concentrating on music as sound does provide a welcome break

from the personality-driven excesses of the rest of the music press, but it does lead to certain cultural and political problems, one of which is minimising the importance of sexuality in music. Even Simon Reynolds and Joy Press's otherwise brilliant *The Sex Revolt* manages to write queers out of the picture altogether — though total neglect is infinitely preferable to the vacuous, threatened sneers of Penman's review

Andy Hedhurst Brighton

Dark mutterings

You should send a copy of Paul Stump's review of *SOMA* (*The Wire* 136) — with the first paragraph highlighted — to each and every one of your writers. His comments re certain electronic music sliding steadily into intellectual conceits, boys-only 'isolationism' (hello to the 'Dark Ambient' snobs at Virgin), and frigid asexuality are right on the mark. "How often can you take Industrial albums to parties or listen to them with lovers?" he asks, rhetorically. Any DJ or musician who is not playing to a hermetic clique already knows the answer to that question (Although David Toop let Man off the hook in his interview in *The Wire* 137 — "Can soul, dark music be ecstatic, joyful, sexual?" Man can't answer, Toop then cleverly tries to use the image of a sunny summer day to impart qualities to the music that it does not possess.)

'Dark' and 'Intelligent' seem to be the adjectives in critical vogue, along with — ahem — 'Ambient' Jungle. (Quite a development in newspaper to refer to crashing 160bpm breakbeats as 'Ambient'.) The intellectual complexity and severity of certain music seems to weigh much heavier in your critics' scale of values than any of the more intangible aspects, such as the spiritual, the meditative, the carnal, the beautiful,

the psychedelic, the ecstatic and — of course — the groove. Believe me, the vast majority of listeners — perhaps especially the female half — do not share this view.

When music is most sublime, it is indeed ineffable. It speaks directly, without reference to theory or history, and it is unafraid to appeal to the soul and the pussy and the cock as well as the mind. Anyone who can't realise something as basic as that deserves a life of listening to droning pointless Vulcan gibberish like Scorn, Lawwell or recent Aoxex.

The last time I DJed at the Electronic Listening Lounge at [Tokyo's] Odyssey, one clubber came up to me during a particularly trance-inducing (in the classic sense) rhythm and said, "This music makes me feel like I'm coming continuously." Now there's a critic. I must admit, I've never heard anyone — in 12 years of DJing both radio and clubs — make a comment as ridiculous as — if I may paraphrase — "As my body becomes increasingly obsidian, music's sensation of release is being replaced by the dread of self-containment" or, "I truly enjoy the simultaneous Techno-primitivism and organic futurism of this music you're playing." Maybe if I play more Man and Scanner, the otaku wallflowers will emerge spewing such comments, but I doubt it, in the past, whenever I've played such music, the chill-room has generally tended to empty out in favour of the dance floor.

Not that I mean to do those artists, whose music I love. The point is that their music is monochromatic, and not suited to many occasions. The 'dark' is not one part of a well-balanced sonic diet, and not a major one, at that; could you try to find a few more critics like Stump who can deal with that?

Giovanni Fazio Tokyo, Japan

Frank talking

In writing about Zappa (*The Wire* 137), Ian Penman raises some very interesting general questions about attitudes to art, artists and audiences. Should I deride an artist's complete output because some of it is dreadful, or because I disapprove of the artist's general attitude or perhaps because I don't like the fans of this art? There are innumerable examples of these dilemmas. Martin Archer on your letters page in the same issue was forced to flush his *ISDN* after getting to know the artists better. Mr. Twen sneered at me (*The Wire* 134) for listening to his music and I wondered why I should give him the satisfaction by playing it again. Was Wagner a proto-Nazi? Just what is Zorn's problem? Should I discard Fero's output because of his awful (ew-jetty Prog following)? Orif had some distasteful fans, too if you look hard enough, almost all art can be regarded as suspect.

However, Zappa's is the strangest case. I've never met anyone (who expressed an opinion) that wasn't polarised one way or another — you're either 100 per cent Zapped or you find him so repellent that his work becomes unapproachable. Clearly the case against is strong and Zappoids are the worst enemies of the pro-cause, a lot of what Penman says about these strange people is woefully accurate. I remember being mortified with embarrassment when a guest, on noticing a few Zappa CDs, asked if that 'Ideus' 'Bobby Brown' song was in there.

But, sorry, I still like some of this stuff! I can't help it, won't deny it and won't apologise for it. I still like "How Soon Is Now?" even if Morrissey was a Smith. I still like my *ISDN* although I tried hard to hate it after that Invisible Jukebox fiasco (*The Wire* 136). What can I do? Become

an ideologue? Then I have to junk most of my collection. No. I use that most fabulous CD feature: the facility to skip all the bad bits.

I, like anybody else, can name cases where the artist or fans have, for me, invalidated the whole of the art. But these are essentially personal emotional reactions and are therefore rather arbitrary. I sympathise with Penman's Zappa problem — it is a toughie, but I can't accept his position that his problem with Zappa fans and Zappa's stance invalidate all his output generally and for everybody. This is the sort of preposterous stance that is typical of Zappa-related discourse, almost as unacceptable as that of the Zappalites themselves. I would be interested if any of *The Wire's* contributors would take part in open discussion of these dilemmas in a more general vein, maybe looking at other interesting cases. As for Penman, he's clearly guilty of the same weaknesses he condemns Zappa and his worshippers for — blindness due to some mysterious mind-block. As for me, I'll zap my CD player and give up trying to justify my likes and dislikes.

Tom Worster
Tom.Worster@aeln.siemens.de

Hairy subject

The meaning of the term 'hairstirt improv' seems a bit unclear to me. Having come across this description many times in your magazine, I feel I have an idea as to what it implies. Does it in some way coincide with the Rock In Opposition movement of the 70s? If someone could clarify this for me it would be a great help.

Craig Wittingham
craigw@freenet.se/su/edu

sounding off

Live dates, multimedia events, happenings...

Compiled by **Rob Young**

News items should reach us by
Friday 8 September for inclusion in the October issue



Martin Rev

Disobey A busy month for the club that doesn't know when to say 'no!'. Firstly, a reminder that on 31 August Disobey London welcomes the legendary Cynthia Plastercaster, who'll be discussing her particular form of commemorative art, and a trade from punk artist Jamie Reid. In September, a double whammy of activities take place in London and Manchester: Martin Rev, the former instrumentalist from Suicide (see page 40), plays a set of improvised Electronica — his first live appearance in Europe since leaving Suicide — accompanied by Chris Watson (a former member of Cabaret Voltaire and The Harrier Trio). They'll be presenting a special piece, "Animal Sounds Of The Atmospheres Of Special Places", with accompanying visuals. Support comes from UK/Dutch subversives Furt. Gates for this are Manchester Hacienda (13 September, £5) and London Upstairs at the Garage (14, £6). All tickets MUST be reserved in advance by phoning the Disobey Hotline: 0181 960 9529. The second round of events features Boyd Rice/Nan, performing material from his new album *Might*, and Sähkö supergroup Panasonic, as part of their ongoing UK tour (see below for details). Local colour comes from CP Lee in Manchester, and BJ Cole in London. Gates are: Manchester Hacienda (27, £6), and London ULU (29, £7), tickets from 0171 323 5481. Bruce Gilbert aka The Beekeeper provides the crones on each night, and (at ULU) performs his piece "The Shed". Miss at your peril.

War Child Brian Eno will be appearing on stage together with Bono, The Edge and opera megastar Luciano Pavarotti in order to raise funds for children caught up in the Bosnian war. The concert in Modena, Italy on 12 September will include Eno's first live vocal performance for almost 20 years, and is also the first time he has appeared live with members of U2 since his association with the group began ten years ago. The charity hopes to use the proceeds to build the Mostar Children's Music Centre in Bosnia, to provide music therapy for young people traumatised by war. The Italian offices for ticket bookings can be reached on 00 39 2 2901 0335 (Milan), or 00 39 6 5220 0342 (Rome). War Child information 0171 727 8656.

Goldie The godfather of Jungle celebrates the selling-out of his debut album by reopening his old club, Rage (at London's Heaven), for one night only on 11 September. DJs Grooverider, Fabio, Kemsley & Storm, Doc Scott and Cohn Favor bring the nose from 10pm onwards, tickets £8, 0171 839 3852.

Swans Michael Gira and Jarboe stop off in the UK for a now-rare live date at London LA2 on 30 September. This follows the release of their first album in three years, *The Great Annihilator*, as well as two solo albums (Gira's *Diamondland* and Jarboe's *Sacrilegious Cake*). A book of Gira's fiction, *The Consumer And Other Stories*, is to be published by 213 61 later this year. LA2 Box Office: 0171 434 0403.

Panasonic That tour in full: the Finnish frequency-pushers play at London Breakfast Club: Silverfish (24 September), Nottingham Jazznology, Sam Fays (26), Manchester Quasoby, Hacienda (27), London Disobey, ULU (29), and London Electronic Lounge, ICA (3 October). Their album for Blast First, *Voko*, will finally be released on 25 September. Enquiries to Disobey on 0181 960 9529.

Return To The Source Ritual dance and Goa trance all-nighter (30 September) arranged by the London crew whose double CD has just been released through Volume. Three rooms in London's Brixton Academy will house live sets from Halluonogen, Goo!, Medicine Drum, Astralasia, Azula,

Mindfield, Cat Von Trapp and Frequency Generator, plus a QJ set from The Orb's Alex Paterson as well as plenty of Source regulars. Plus Sushrutha Dance Theatre, market, massage and live drumming. 9pm-6am, £10/£12, 0171 924 9999.

Moving Music The Smith Quartet, one of the first chamber groups to incorporate electronics into their performance successfully, and who travel with their own PA system, host a four night showcase of their repertoire at London's Place Theatre (13-16 September). Featured works include the complete quartets of Henryk Gorecki, and commissions from Oleg Bates, Michael Gaugherty, Elena Alberga and Martin Butler. They'll also

Robert Wilson

PHOTO: HUGO GLENNING



perform string quartets by Elena Perova, Stephen Montague, Ezequiel Viloso and Michael Alcorn. In addition, on 14 September at 7pm, 'Moving Minds' is a pre-concert interactive event featuring an open rehearsal by The Smith Quartet, with a discussion of New Music and technology and short live performance. All other concerts start at 8pm, tickets £7-£15, full details from the Box Office: 0171 387 0031

The Electronic Lounge

Belgium's Crammed Discs take the helm this month at the only club that lets you hear yourself think. With sets from Aural Expansion and QJ Morpheus, a splendid time is guaranteed for all. 5 September, London ICA, 8.30pm-1am, £2-50/£2 Info: 0171 498 3032

Robert Wilson Continuing the far-sighted commissioning they displayed on Brian Eno and Laurie Anderson's *Self Storage* installation, London art producers Artangel's latest project is *HG*, a new work by Robert Wilson, the American artist and stage designer who's previously worked with Philip Glass, among many others. Wilson has been given a space in South London's Clink Street Vaults, formerly a medieval prison, to create the effect of a journey through time. He's aided in this by long-term collaborator and sound designer Hans Peter Kuhn (see

feature page 20), and Peter Greenaway's art director, Michael Howells. The installation is on view at Clink Street Vaults, SE1, between 12 September-15 October. It's open Tuesday-Friday 6-9pm/Saturday-Sunday 12-9pm, admission £4-50 (conics free Tuesdays) Information: 0171 336 6803

Towering Inferno The UK group's visionary, multimedia 'dream history' of 20th century Europe, *Kaddish*, is given two special performances in Berlin, at the city's House Of World Culture, on 31 August and 1 September. The dates had been postponed until now, following threats from German neo-fascist groups. UK dates in early October are to be announced shortly, and the soundtrack to *Kaddish* has just been reissued by Island Records.

WOMAD This is the seventh year positioning for the World Music festival at its Morecombe Bay, Lancashire location (1-3 September). Featured artists include Fun-Da-Mental, Azar Man (Pakistan), King Ayemba Wasau Marshall (Nigeria), Albert Ssempeke (Uganda), ex-Waterbury Mike Scott, Andy Hamilton, Gary Clail And The Full Nine Yards, Ali Hassan Kuban (Egypt), Ali Slimani (Algeria), Orquesta D'Cache (Columbia), Shankar with Midge Ure, and Justin Vali Trio/Jean Emilien

Live In Brief

Pierre Bensusan Electric/acoustic guitar specialist goes solo. 10 September, London Purcell Room, 8pm, £8.50, 0171 928 8800.

Jack Bruce Ex-Cream bassist presents two evenings of music with Parliamentarian Bernie Worrell accompanying on Hammond organ. Dates are Edinburgh Queen's Hall (2 September, 0131 668 2019) and London Queen Elizabeth Hall (4, 0171 928 8800).

Frank Chickens Japanese synth cabaret, plus British Summertime Ends, and others. 4 September, London Praxe Jenny's at the Vortex, 8pm, £4/£3, 0171 254 6516

Chris Isaak David Lynch's favourite singer-songwriter comes to town 30 September, London Shepherd's Bush Empire, £12.50/£15, 0181 740 7474

Jazz Rumours Weekly improv gathering: Steve Beresford (3 September), Trevor Watts's Mike Music Trio (10), Dave Fowler/Jim Dwyer (17), and Eddie Prickett with Marco Mattos, Vanyan Weston and Geoff Hawkins (20). Sundays, London Vortex, £4/£3, 0171 254 6516

Tata Dindin Jobarteh West African kora star teamed with UK group Mythic Space. 27 September, London Purcell Room, 7.30pm, £8, 0171 928 8800.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Three hour qawwal from world-renowned exponent. 31 August, London Barbican, 7.30pm, £35-£15, 0171 638 8891.

Yousouf N'Dour Senegalese prime mover hosts all-star evening as part of Africa 95 festival. With Stevie Wonder, Gilberto Gil, Salif Keita, Baaba Maal, and others. 22-23 September, London Royal Albert Hall, 8pm, 0171 589 8212.

Pharoah Sanders Grand Vizier of mystic sax flies in for London Jazz Festival. 28 September, London Astoria, 0171 434 0403.

Jim Staley/Davey Williams UK debut of trombonist Staley, a sometime Zorn/Fraser collaborator, Plus Say What, with Steve Noble and Owen Marshall. 10 September, London Water Rats, 8pm, £5/£3.50, 0171 278 3879.

Rapoon Newcastle sound sculptor performs at new London experimental club Immerse. 24 September, London Upstairs at the Garage, £6, 7.30pm, info on 0171 254 8016.

Tindersticks Morbid melodramatises perform their string orchestra show for last time in UK this year. 10 September, London Her Majesty's Theatre, £10, 0171 494 5050.

Transient v Resident Sheffield synth-bashers break out of the studio. 2 September, Manchester St Aidan's Hall (with Beck/Fell/Hesson), 15, London Priory Arms (with Simon Vincent), Lansdowne Way, SWB.

Papa Wemba Emotional Zaroks now living in Paris joins the Edinburgh Festival. 3 September, Edinburgh Meadowbank Stadium, £8.50/£5, 0131 220 4349.

sounding off

(Madagascar) The festival takes place along the seafloor at Morecambe Bay; tickets range between £5-£10, Box Office 01 524 562803

Theremins Two opportunities to witness the only instrument you can play without touching (see feature page 26) On 22 September there's a talk and demonstration of the instrument at London's Science Museum (7pm, 0171 938 8078) given by Lydia Kavina, the great-niece of its inventor, Léon Theremin. Earlier in the month, Kavina gives a theremin concert at Southampton Guildhall (16 September, 7-4pm, £6-50, 01 703 632601). Assisted by piano, harp and soprano, she'll perform works by Rachmaninov, Debussy and Saint-Saëns, plus Celtic folk music and some of her own compositions

Julian Cope In the wake of his new double album *20 Mothers*, the singer/author turned New Age evangelist embarks on a major UK tour this month, playing a full three-hour show on all dates. Here's the itinerary: Cardiff University (22 September), Bristol University (23), Cambridge Corn Exchange (24), Brighton Event (25), Wolverhampton Civic (27), Manchester Academy (28), Liverpool Royal Court (29), Glasgow Barrowlands (30), Leeds Town And Country (2 October), Nottingham Rock City (3) and London

Shepherds Bush Empire (5). Tickets are £10 in London, £8-50 elsewhere. The book that arose out of his articles on Krautrock for *The Wire* at the beginning of this year, *Krautrock: sampler*, is due to be published before the end of the year by Cope's own publishing imprint.

BBC Proms 95 More contemporary programmes are to be found in September's leg of the annual classical season at London's Royal Albert Hall. The highlight is undoubtedly the rhythm-driven concert on 11 September (7-30pm), which combines musicians from Africa, America and Europe including The Hilliard Ensemble, The Hague Percussion Group, timbale expert Venancio Mbende and James Wood's Critical Band, to perform works ranging from medieval polyphony to Mozambique traditional music to contemporary composition, including Xenakis's *Okta*, Messiaen's *Couleurs De Lo Cité Celeste* and Wood's *Two Men Meet*. Each Presuming *The Other To Be From A Distant Planet*. Other concerts to watch for include Jonathan Harvey's *Madonna Of Winter And Spring*, Peter Etohos's *Psychokosmos*, plus Debussy and Bartók (4 September, 7-30pm), Georges Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique*, Steve Reich's *City Life* plus Stravinsky (7, 7pm), Nicholas Maw's *The World In The Evening* (8, 7-30pm), Elliott Carter's



Asiago Tenorino (1-3, 7pm), a new work by Luciano Berio (1-5, 7-30pm), and finally, Harrison Birtwistle's *Panic*, performed on the Last Night (16, 7-30pm). Cheapest tickets are in the Promenade Arena (standing, £3) and the Gallery (£2), and there's a wide range of prices for seats in the rest of the hall (plus see offer below). Royal Albert Hall Box Office 0171 589 8212
THE WIRE/PROMS 95 NEW MUSIC OFFER By special arrangement with BBC Proms 95, we can offer Wire readers discounts of **£3 OFF ALL TICKETS** (does not include Promenade or Gallery) for the following two New

Music Concerts: Jonathan Harvey, Peter Etohos, Debussy and Bartók (4 September), Hilliard Ensemble/Critical Band/James Wood (11). To receive your £3 discount on these performances, simply take the issue of *The Wire* along to the Box Office when purchasing your tickets, or mention 'The Wire/BBC Proms Ticket Offer'.

Livewires Monthly forum for live sets by upcoming and established New Electronics artists, organised by London's Ambient Soho/Worm Interface organisation. This month live improvisation from GPR acts Germ and John Dalby, as well as Freeform and Qunderhead. Oling from Grant (Rephlex), Kevin (Ninja Tune) and Martin Stacey. 2 September, London George Robey, 1pm-6pm, £6/£5 Info 0171 437 0521

Transgressions Advance warning of a new *Wire* initiative: in November we take over Community Music House in London's Farringham Road to present Transgressions, four nights of groundbreaking music and multimedia installations. Tentative line-up includes Higher Intelligence Agency/Oscillate Sound System with ice sculptor Jony Ederby, Otomo Yoshio, Techno Animal, HEX's interactive nightclub, Earth Tribe with Talvin Singh, Frances-Mae Uitt, Exploding Cinema and Celeste, plus installations by Funky Porcine, Wash Mountain and Scanner. More surprise acts and OJs to be announced. Full details will appear next month. Keep all four Saturdays in November free. □

TV & Radio

Motherhood Connections (Channel 4, 26 August) The Black Audio Film Collective's welcome history of black science fiction from Samuel Delany to Sun Ra, Lee Perry and George Clinton. Includes interviews with Derrick May, A Guy Called Gerald, Juan Atkins, Goldie, Carl Craig and 4 Hero.

Heard And Now (BBC Radio 3, Fridays, times vary) New Music magazine. Robert Zagler and Sarah Walker present live recordings, studio discussions, festival location reports and more.

Africa 95: Talking Drums (BBC Radio 3, 11-15 September, times vary) Five-part voyage into African rhythm and spirituality. Presented by Lucy Duran.

Mixing It (BBC Radio 3, Mondays 10.45-11.30pm) Mark Russell and Robert Sandall's eclectic mix includes an interview with Chris Cutler (4 September).

On The Wire (BBC Radio Lancs, Sunday mornings 12.05-2am) Steve Barker plays everything from dub, World Music, Electronica, out rock, free jazz and beyond. Essential listening.

The Chill Out Zone (Kiss 100 FM, Thursdays 1-4am/Sundays 6-7am) Paul Thomas's special guests this month include Aural Expansion (7 September), Alex Reese (21) and Slikk Records (26).

Alpha Waves (Kiss 102 FM Manchester, Saturdays 4-6am) Stuart James plays future directions in chill out and dub music, with guest assistance from The Big Chill's Pete Lawrence (2 September).

Disenpage (Kiss 102 FM Manchester, Saturday-Sunday 4-6am) Uninterrupted electronic mix courtesy of Auechne's Sean Booth and Rob Brown.

Facing the wrong way selections from current and forthcoming albums on **4AD**

1	Take You Anywhere Scheer	Christially (Wicked Man Remix) The Wolfgang Press	8
2	Singleface Throwing Muses	Miracle (New Version) Heidi Berry	9
3	Summer Dress Red House Painters	Sanvean Lisa Gerrard	10
4	The Well Tarnation	Chap Cutz Liquorice	11
5	You Sweet Little Heartbreaker Air Miami	Valley Of The Morning Sun Kendra Smith	12
6	Love Songs On The Radio Mojave	Empty Glasses (Kim's Basement 4 track version) The Amps	13
7	Super-Connected Belly		

Free

Yours **FREE** when you buy ANY CD
released by 4AD or Guernica from
Virgin Magazine or the Chain With
No Name while stocks last.

Offer includes CD's by
The Breeders, Belly, Pinks,
Cortez Twins, The Wolfgang Press,
Red House Painters, Heidi Berry,
Dead Can Dance, Throwing Muses,
The Birthday Party, The Horrid Gals,
Pale Saints, Lush,
Bertie Silverstein and Lisa Gerrard.
All available at a reduced price for
a limited period.

Available from 28th August 1995.

4AD



Available at



MEGASTORES

San Francisco

Located near the corner of Divisadero and Haight in one of the 'quieter' parts of San Francisco, St John's African Orthodox Church is easy to find. It's a neat shop front with curtains over the windows and an unobtrusive sign. In one window is a portrait of St John himself, along with a text entitled 'A Love Supreme.' It looks like any one of the many store-front churches that proliferate in the poorer sections of America's cities. But this church is dedicated to the Patron Saint John Coltrane.

The church was founded in 1971, in those days it was called One Mind Temple Evolutionary Transitional Body Of Christ. On 23 September 1972 (Coltrane's birthday), it moved to its present location. The triumph of Coltrane's life over his many adversities, as well as the intense spiritual nature of his music and testimony, inspired the church leaders to organise a religious community dedicated to two basic tenets: 'Live clearly, do right.' In January 1982, the One Mind Temple was incorporated as a recognised member of the Great Body Of The African Orthodox Church. The name was amended to St John's, and on 6 May 1984 the founder, Franco Wayne King, was consecrated Bishop. Since then the church has grown (as has its charitable works), but it still occupies the same premises.

The church itself is housed on the ground floor of the converted shop. The altar is situated at the west end, opposite the shop-front entrance. On the north wall is a series of modern icons. Painted in the traditional style of the Byzantine era by iconographer Rev Mark CE Dukes, they include a stunning portrait of St John himself, dressed in white robes and holding a soprano saxophone. Against this wall are about ten wooden pews. Between the ends of the pews and the south wall is a narrow aisle. Ranged along the wall are an upright piano and a minimal drum kit, and there is space for several more instruments. On the altar are more icons in the same style, one of which appears to depict Miles Davis as a very black angel. To the left of the altar, in glorious isolation, is the main icon of St John Will-I-Am Coltrane, this time holding his tenor saxophone, flames bursting from its bell.

The Sunday service begins around noon. The regular congregation occupy the front pews, while the irregulars shyly fill those at the back. A shabbily dressed young black man sits in front of me, next to a pair of bongos, to my left are two young white couples. At 11.45 we are addressed by a deaconess, who tells us of the church, its history and its works. We should feel

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .



welcome, she says, and reminds us that the service is long, toilets are at the back of 'the shop', drinks (non-alcoholic) are available for the thirsty, and for the hungry and enduring, a free vegetarian meal will be served at the conclusion of the service. During this short speech, various musicians arrive, including a female electric bass player, a conga player, drummer, acoustic bassist and a pianist who sits down and warms up.

The service begins with the electric bass playing the continuo to 'Africa.' Gradually the other instruments join in, with Bishop King's soprano sax and Bishop Norman Williams's tenor swapping the lead. Essentially, what ensues is an orthodox Catholic service, but one which uses the music of the church's patron saint to accompany the liturgy. The hymns — 'Africa', 'Acknowledgment', 'A Love Supreme', 'Psalms', 'Lionie's Lament', 'Spiritual', 'Almighty God', and 'Hear What Our Lord' — are all integrated with the traditional prayers and responses. 'A Love Supreme' becomes a deep mantra with the whole congregation

chanting. 'May There Be Peace' is reinterpreted as a long drawn out sigh. At one stage, hidden from the view of the congregation, someone starts playing a Hammond organ. Behind me, an older man produces a harmonica and wails. Bongos and congas are beaten, tambourines are shaken, people start clapping, bodies jump and dance. The whole church rocks.

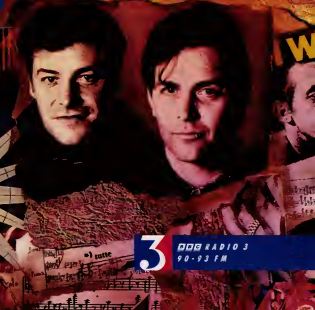
Gradually, the proceedings begin to resemble those of a 'conventional' black church service, with more singing and less playing. By 2.45 the service is almost wholly orthodox. As I start to leave, I speak to a deacon and deaconess who are standing by the door. I tell them that I am not a Christian, but I saw Coltrane when I was 17 and was touched by his power, energy and obvious spiritual strength. They say goodbye warmly, shaking hands and hugging me. Outside the weather is fine. I walk along Haight for a while, which is coming alive with its own reality of punks, panhandlers and pushers. I catch the bus back into town. It is full of the usual headcases, including one extolling the virtues of Ric Ocasek. **BILLY WILKES**

New music on Radio 3

Mixing It Mark Russell and Robert Sandall front the mix of rare, strange and beautiful new sounds every Monday at 10.45pm on BBC Radio 3.

This month's highlights include a profile of Chris Cutler on September 4 and a studio session from blues guitarist Rainer Ptacek on September 18.

Hear and Now ... at the cutting edge of contemporary music. Try it! Friday evenings till midnight on BBC Radio 3.



3

BBC RADIO 3
90-93 FM

bites

Skylab

Skylab have perfected a strain of neo-Luddism which has actually catapulted them ahead of droves of plodders with presets. If you missed last year's unpromoted #1 album, now's the time to backtrack: the electrostatic studio encounter between prime mover Mat Ducease, producer Howe B, and Tosh and Kudo (also known as Major Force and Love TKD) plummeted towards a tranquility base on the far side of end-of-millennium white noise. Aided by Ducease's vast collection of strange tape fragments, Howe B's trademark unravelling of the turntable's linearity through application of echoes and effects, and the arsenal of exotic instruments — beatdrop guitars, banjos, theremin, shortwave radios, hearing aid — brought along by the Japanese duo, the record floated free from the gravitational weight currently imposed by the rhythms and generic orthodoxies of Techno and drum 'n' bass. Their painterly vision is boosted immeasurably by Howe's microlight production, which creates the illusion of many more tracks than eight.

"I try to keep sampling to a minimum," Ducease explains over the phone from San Francisco, where he's been staying this year before returning to London in the autumn: "Programming, all that computer stuff is boring. Sequence-based music means you're thinking about it too hard: our way there's so much room for surprises and accidents, which you could never come up with otherwise." It's a distrust of digital technology that Tosh, at least, shares. While agreeing that Skylab's music is cinematic — "Here flat landscape make some cactus on there" — he won't compare it to the easy recombinant art methods offered by personal computers. "I hate it, I got no choice, though — they're coming for me! Apple, Microsoft, they treat us like fools, games pigs. For me, it's



much easier to make live music."

Which is just what the group hope to do later this year after recording another album in Spain, although they haven't yet worked out how to translate their open-form studio sessions into a coherent public spectacle. It's more suited to unusual approaches such as the live-to-modern broadcast undertaken for Radio 1 last year, and which turns up on their new EP, "Oh Skylab." "That was mad," recalls Ducease. "We were in this school on the wild coast of Ireland, full of Catholic schoolboys who were full-on Junglists, and they had to remix us on air. The music master played on the computer and lost a lot of the work that we'd done. It was nerve wracking."

An accompanying 12" is called "Exotica," and sure enough, Tosh turns out to be a fan of Les Baxter, Martin Denny and Esquivel: the music that's made a quantum

Ken Vandermark

leap across 40 years of rock 'n' roll to inspire a current wave of future-nostalgia. "I saw August Colon live in Tokyo, making bird calls and weird animal screams — he's brilliant." Mat Ducease professes a fondness for another untapped past: the analogue space psychedelia of groups such as The West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band, the techno-folk rock of The Byrds' Roger McGuinn, who was obsessed with jet planes and space travel as much as the Grand Ole Opry, and the so-funk of The Undisputed Truth: "They had an incredible album called *Method To The Madness*. There's a weird conversation between space aliens and the band, and then the band say, 'We've got to go to outer space because no one appreciates what we're doing.'" Small wonder it strikes a chord. **ROB YOUNG** "Oh Skylab" and "Exotica" are out now on L'Attitude (through PolyGram)

leap across 40 years of rock 'n' roll to inspire a current wave of future-nostalgia. "I saw August Colon live in Tokyo, making bird calls and weird animal screams — he's brilliant." Mat Ducease professes a fondness for another untapped past: the analogue space psychedelia of groups such as The West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band, the techno-folk rock of The Byrds' Roger McGuinn, who was obsessed with jet planes and space travel as much as the Grand Ole Opry, and the so-funk of The Undisputed Truth: "They had an incredible album called *Method To The Madness*. There's a weird conversation between space aliens and the band, and then the band say, 'We've got to go to outer space because no one appreciates what we're doing.'" Small wonder it strikes a chord. **ROB YOUNG** "Oh Skylab" and "Exotica" are out now on L'Attitude (through PolyGram)

Jonathan Harvey

Jonathan Harvey is one of a handful of contemporary composers whose music, however difficult, somehow speaks to a wide audience. To call his music accessible would seem inappropriate, perhaps unfair, because there are none of the pumping ostinato figures, sustained consonance or hybrid elements we might associate with that word. Yet plenty of people are about to get further access to Harvey's soundworld, at the Proms, where The BBC Symphony Orchestra perform *Madonna Of Winter And Spring*, his 1986 Proms commission, and on *Imagings*, a new CD of improvisations with cellist Frances-Marie Uitti released on the Chill Out Label.

Harvey compares the structure of *Madonna* to the process of meditation, "where the turmoil of many

thoughts, anxieties and feelings gradually descends into a stillness, without energy, without content." In this calmer state, he says, "the mind is freed to allow to arise more refined feeling."

In *New Sounds, New Personalities* (Paul Griffiths's book of interviews with British composers), Harvey questioned the existence of timbre — a striking idea for one who had spent so many hours teasing completely new sounds into existence at research establishments such as IRCAM and MIT. Ten years later, he qualifies the thought: "Perhaps to doubt timbre's existence is like doubting happiness's existence. We all know it exists in some way, but the more you try to grasp it, the more it eludes you, conceptually. It's a broad category composed of harmony and 'behaviour in time' or rhythm, amongst other things."

Now in his mid-fifties, Harvey is an established composer with a steady flow of commissions and

performances. He starts work on a composition slowly, thinking about the idea away from the desk on long walks with much day-dreaming. Pencil sketches follow, and as he speeds up the writing process he uses piano, synthesizer, cello and violin — mostly to have the sound in his body and mind as stimulation.

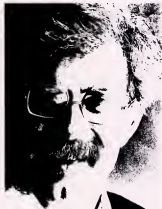
"The Prom makes me nervous, because of all the technical complexities to be solved," says Harvey. The full symphony orchestra is subjected to amplification and sound processing; the piano, harp and vibraphone are ring-modulated and the whole ensemble augmented by synthesizers. Harvey likes the ring modulator's connecting function and inharmonic possibilities and the synths are labelled sound A, sound B, and so on, in the score. "In broad terms, the form is made of a set of constantly recurring and interweaving melodies, their metamorphosis into the new melodies of 'Many' [the final section] make for a developmental

while Steelwood allows him to solo with a breadth of angularity in a variety of moods that recalls Eric Dolphy at his best. Signal To Noise Unit is for free improvisation in a textural environment, "influenced by groups like AMM and composers like Scelsi and Ligeti — exploring a kind of superlunatic stasis, with a lot of tension in it. I don't play much pitch-oriented saxophone there," is how he describes it. Then there's the volatile Vandermark/Kessler/Drake trio. And The Vandermark Quartet, where Dan Scantler's nose-rock guitar and Michael Zerang's World Music drumming push the saxophonist into multi-stylistic ploys. And following the death of its founder Hal Russell, the remaining members of The NRG Ensemble have invited Vandermark to join the group — not as a replacement for Russell, but as a power surge.

What put him on such a diverse and diligent path? Growing up in Boston, with a father who was a jazz and New Music enthusiast, he initially came in contact with the music as a teenager. "I remember while in high school seeing The Art Ensemble Of Chicago and not getting it. The first group that really started to click for me was The Fringe. I used to see them pretty regularly

and I got into the fact that they could get their instruments to do a lot of things not normally associated with traditional or conventional jazz. That's what pulled me in. Then the main trigger was Joe McPhee's solo tenor sax record [Tenor, on hat Hut]. When I heard that a lot of stuff started to make sense, that you could do something extremely dissonant, use overtones and everything, and still be incredibly musical. That record really spoke to me, and made me think that was what I wanted to do."

Of course, there's a pragmatic reason for all this activity too. "I find it hard to do all the things I want to do with just one ensemble. Each group has its own personality, its own context. But then, trying to perform as much as possible in this city... if you play with a bunch of different bands that play once a month, you play a lot more." After all, there are bills to be paid. Man — even one as voracious as Ken Vandermark — can't live on music alone. **ART LANGE** *Coffeen's Caffeine* and Steelwood's *International Front* are out now on Oika Disk (through Harmonia Mundi). *The Vandermark Quartet's Solid Action* is out now on Platypus, 3212 N Ravenswood #2, Chicago, IL 60657, USA.



form of the opposite type to the classical — they become gentler rather than more energetic."

So this musical journey from complexity to clarity works against the expectations and instincts of every Prommer in search of a rousing finale (and most rock, soul and gospel ensembles you might mention). This spaced-out, other-worldly aspect of Harvey's music will endear him to adventurous listeners, who can negotiate the written structure as confidently as backpackers with torn maps, and absorb his shimmering soundworld like the sun on a Goan beach. **JOHN L. WALTERS** *Madonna Of Winter*. And *Spring* is performed on 4 September (see *Sounding Off* for reduced ticket details). *Imagings* is released this month on Chill Out (01 71 234 0091).

Rootsman

The debut 1994 release by the Leeds-based dub producer The Rootsman was a landmark for the kind of cultural mobility and hybridisation that has been facilitated by digital technology, reinterpreting Philip Glass's *Koyaanisqatsi* as an evocatively Biblical, heavyweight dub. "I saw no contradiction in having that conscious feel from *Koyaanisqatsi*," he says. "People feel reggae deals with Africa, but this was a Native American prophecy. Yet when the record came out I got flack from the reggae scene because they thought it was a devil chant. They didn't understand it so they fought against it."

The Rootsman is one of a number of producers, engineers, musicians and DJs who have emerged in recent years to revolutionise UK roots music. Developing a peculiarly British synthesis, a post-"Sling Teng" cyber sound that avoids the 70s dub nostalgia of a group such as Alpha & Omega, these artists step outwards to celebrate transgression, constructing the kind of hybrid-headed fusions made possible by the digital sampler. "Young people growing up in this country aren't listening to 70s dub," he suggests, "they're bombarded with Jungle, A&R, Techno, all digital stuff, technology that surrounds us all. I'm making roots music for today."

Previously a resident DJ at Leeds's infamous Soundclash club, he served his roots apprenticeship as part of Bradford's Iration Steppas sound system, having found his way into reggae after hearing Hugh Mundell's *Africa Must Be Free By 1983* ("I listened to nothing else for three months"). Now regarded by

the UK's nu-ruts/digi-dub scene as something of a heretic (partly because of *Koyaanisqatsi*, but also for imitating the likes of Dr Alex Paterson and Andrew Weatherall to DJ at Soundclash), he has just released his debut album, *In Dub We Trust*. The record isn't as remarkable as his earlier, brilliant EP releases, but it's still a wifely nomadic travelogue that captures the anti-essentialist, sampladelic ferment of the best 90s roots.

"What's happened in dub is a reflection of what happens in all music scenes. In any scene, the vast majority of people will have a very narrow view of what that music should be, then you have a small percentage of experimentalists who strive to take the music forward." **K. MARTIN** *In Dub We Trust* is out now on Third Eye.





Locust

Mark Van Hoen used to play bass with Seefeel, he also co-produced their first two EPs, but left before the post-rockers had signed a deal. Nowadays he's better known for the dark Electronica he releases under the name Locust, and for a string of collaborations that have seen him reunited with Seefeel's Darren Seymour (on this year's austere and minimalist *Touch LP*, *Autobardo* [Innovation]), as well as working with Autocreation and vocalist Annie Williams. Last year's Locust album *Weathered Well* combined a dreamy, orchestral beauty with vibrant Techno. His latest album, however, has a totally different feel.

Truth Is Born Of Arguments is a work of brutal rawness with a disturbingly primal air. On most of the tracks the music pounds away at its cold industrial contours and even where the intensity subsides it's made abundantly clear that the suffering continues, whether it be in the sacrificial wildness of "I Become Overwhelmed" or the off-key sadness of "Inside I Am Crying." It's almost as though the material on *Weathered Well* has been swept away by an ice-floe.

In part such developments are the fruit of new technology. "My previous material was analogue," explains Van Hoen, "but on this LP all but one of the tracks were composed using digital synths. It all comes down to the concept that electronic music should exist

as something outside of real time. You no longer have to create a track in the time it takes to listen to it, there's a real compression of time and layers."

Aside from a flamboyant flight of trumpet and some interesting hurdy-gurdy drones, *Truth* is a celebration of new sounds and new programming ideas. Inspired by the methods of Jungle, if not by its speed, Van Hoen sets out to dismember his rhythms, beats gather momentum only to fragment and reassemble themselves. Inspired by a run of bad relationships, the track tries on *Truth* read like a testimony to the damage done by love. Even a track called "The Optimist" runs through "I Become Overwhelmed" into "I'm Afraid Of Who I Am." To Locust, such tortured introspection is a positive part of any composing process.

"Whatever art you're involved in, you always learn something about yourself. The title came from a film by Tarkovsky and it really sums up the whole idea of music for me. It's about a questioning process — almost an argument — some kind of truth coming out of that."

"I'm surprised that people find the disc so bleak. I look on it as a positive record because it's so honest. For me, putting all those questions on a record was like a purging of feelings. Perhaps people find that difficult to handle, but for me it was a positive thing. By the time I'd finished it I'd actually decided it was very happy and uplifting." **SUSAN MASTERS** *Truth Is Born Of Arguments* is out now on *RES/Apollo* (through *Vital*)

Dead C

Like Flying Saucer Attack and their self-styled "rural psychedelia," the music of New Zealand's Dead C sounds consistently rustic in its appropriation of the kind of guitar-based avant rock techniques pioneered by Sonic Youth, producing a folkhose hybrid of uncommon power and grace. Their debut album *DR503b*, recorded in 1987, still sounds contemporary, if only by virtue of the fact that its combination of atonal guitar drones, primitive percussion and elegiac mood has become far more common through the endeavours of America's lo-fi network.

"I don't feel much affinity with lo-fi groups per se," explains the group's Bruce Russell via fax from his base

in Auckland. (The other group members are drummer Robbie Yeats and guitarist Michael Morley.) "I identify more with a band like Borbetomagus who release live stereo recordings of collective improvisation. To me, what we do is much more in that kind of jazz tradition. The Americans tend to be more fixated on a sort of 'shambling' singer/songwriter thing, whereas we are more about collective sound and power. I don't want to make wallpaper music. I want people to react to our music. If you want to use a painterly analogy, we're art brut expressionists — outsiders."

Listening to the group's new album *The White House*, as well as the recent *World Peace* Hope compilation, the trio's sound seems to have become harsher since their inception, "less timid, less concerned with being well-received," as Russell states in his fax. "To an extent,

we're operating in an insular, self-referential soundworld." One exception to this is the provocative title of their 1990 album, *Harsh 70s Reality*. As Russell puts it, "I think of it as a response to the whole glamour/ostalgia industry that's sprung up around the 70s thing, eg *Urgo Overkill* in *Pulp Fiction*. We're harking back to another 70s, the 70s that gave us the first two Kraftwerk LPs. This Heat, early Pere Ubu, The Fall and Cabaret Voltaire. That reality."

All three Dead C members are involved in side projects, with Gate, Michael Morley's collaboration with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo, being the most intriguing. "In Gate, Michael doesn't have to pander to the entrenched prejudices of Robbie or I. He's the dictator for a change," suggests Russell, whose own side project is *A Handful Of Dust*.

Gate is an even more isolated-sounding venture than Dead C. Their one release, *The Dew Line*, is a masterpiece of hermeticism, secretive about its origins and almost as private about the emotions it is trying to express. Appropriately, Morley didn't reply to the faxes sent over in time to make the interview, though a new Gate album is due within the month. Given these communication difficulties, Bruce Russell's conclusion is apt enough: "We are, for better or worse, an international phenomenon stuck on the arse edge of the world." **JAKUBOWSKI** *The White House* is released this month by *Siltbreeze* (through *Vital*). *World Peace Hope* is available on *Shock*, 56 Beresford Rd, London E9. *The Dew Line* is released by *Table Of The Elements*, Box 5524, Atlanta, Georgia 30307, USA.



NEW FROM CHÉ IN 1995

slipstream

UP IN HEAVEN 7" Cht 35 Aug 21st
 COME BACK 7" Cht 35 Aug 21st
 SIDE EFFECTS CD Cht 37 Dec 30

urusei yatsura

SIAMISE 7" Cht 38 Aug 28th

ché compilations

DOES THE WORD "DAM" MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU? CD Cht 40 Sept 4th
 LIGAMENT/SPIRITUALITY Split 7" No. 3 7" Cht 42 Sept 25th

bardo pond

BUFF ALUMINUM, AMEN 20:15 CD Cht 33 Sept 11th

dart

BUGGER 7" Cht 41 Sept 18th
 36 CENTS AN HOUR CD/UP Cht 39 Nov 12th

the bardots

CARRION 7" Cht 43 Dec 2nd
 VILEX CD/UP Cht 44 Nov 8th

lilys

GINGER/AM OF THE MONKEY 7" Cht 45 Dec 4th
 EGGSAFE THE PHOTON BAND CD Cht 46 Dec 4th

mail order/information: po box 653, london E18 2NX
 0181 530 8381. e-mail: che@chehd.demon.co.uk
 purveyors of quality sound carriers since 1991

Spring Heel Jack

There
Are
Strings

THE DEBUT ALBUM AVAILABLE NOW ON
 DOUBLE VINYL, CASSETTE AND CD.
 A SWITCHING FUSION OF FIFTIES SCIFI,
 SIXTIES CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL,
 SEVENTIES DUB, EIGHTIES ELECTRO AND
 NINETIES HARDSTEP. A CLASSIC.



scorn
 seefeel
 yanomami shamans
 timothy leary +
 dj cheb i sabbah

swans
 related project:
 m. gira



vocalist: force,
 dron: baba voice,
 the first: m. gira
 10 90000 with
 Bill Riekin (Ministry)

distributed
 sub rosa

vocalist: lights
 and the darkness
 sub rosa

Sub Rosa will take
 your hand and
 lead you up the
 open garden path.
 Covered with
 Ambient sounds
 dense of the music
 enhancing travel
 being made at the
 moment The wire



sub rosa

distributed by cargo
 ph 181-6799296 fax 8799227

children
 black laboratory
 sub rosa

Godflesh leader
 guitar: m. gira
 + the first: m. gira
 Andy Hawkins' Azucic
 produced by Bill Riekin

justin broadrick andy hawkins
 sub rosa



justin broadrick
 (godflesh)
 andy hawkins
 (blind idiot god)

the master
 musicians
 of Joujouka



features: 'Baba
 Jovan Joujouka
 very strong
 describing the
 making of
 'Baba Jovan
 presents the
 Pops of Pops
 at Joujouka

distributed
 sub rosa

Saxophonist **Steve Williamson** is hotwiring jazz with the rhythmic complexities of jungle. Story by Will Montgomery

"I'd like to see something else in jazz — kick somebody up the arse. I'm not really into this walk up to the microphone, do your solo, clap clap clap stuff. Feels limiting."

Steve Williamson has never been happy with the chem that separates the well-mannered world of jazz consumption from the atmosphere surrounding the black music he grew up with: funk, rap, soul, reggae. From the outset he's struggled to bridge it, though his efforts haven't always met with approval. Chief among the critical beils is his debt to the complex rhythmic and melodic equations which characterise the street-beats-meets-jazz style of New York's M-Base collective, which he adopted, on his 1992 *Rhyme Time* album, following the disintegration of The Jazz Warriors. These days he maintains it was the most creative move to make at the

time, as well as a way of escaping the 'new Coltrane' tag that an over-enthusiastic media had burdened him with. "I was young and my ideas weren't developed. Along comes this guy [M-Base founder] Steve Coleman and he was doing something different, and that was reason enough to go in that direction."

More recently, his preference for rhythmic complexity has drawn him into exploring the infernal mazes of jungle. At a time when the rush of the infinite breakfast seems to be carrying all before it, this is hardly a revolutionary step. But few other musicians in jazz will be approaching the new options suggested by drum 'n' bass as liberating organisational principles rather than textural add-ons.

"It's very British and more relevant to what I'm about. I've been influenced by that more than I've been influenced by anything in the past. I want the stuff to be even more funky. The jungle is very dark and I like that depth, that depth of funk."

Williamson isn't impressed by those within the jazz fraternity who remain closed to technology, unwilling to relinquish the belief that 'soul' is a quality conferred exclusively to sentient beings attached to drumsticks.

"Jungle's a very human, interactive style. It's the highest level that we've actually reached in terms of programming. It's generating new beats all the time. I can't imagine a jazz musician not

The drum 'n' bass aesthetic is not to be found on his new *Journey To Truth* album, which has been gathering dust since last June. A nervy melange of rap, funk and jazz, it's a long way from the softcore jazz funk some UK musicians of his generation have chosen to play. There's a polished, soulful dimension to Jhelsa Anderson's vocal tracks, but Williamson's angular rhythmic inclinations and sharp harmonic sense give the pieces an edge.

It took three years for Williamson to persuade a record company to allow him to record a follow-up to *Rhyme Time*. He still stands by the earlier record and feels that its uneasy reception is a reflection of the difficulties of the 'jazz' bracket. It's something he's felt more constrained by than most of his generation, which may have something to do with the fact that he didn't begin playing saxophone until he was 16, by which time he was heavily into the freaker end of funk and rap.

Already obsessed with Parliament, HipHop happened for the schoolboy Williamson the day his elder brother came back from a New York trip with some new dance steps and a white label of a Sugarhill Gang record. By the time the single was out over here, Williamson and his sister knew the words by heart. These days he is perhaps unique among saxophonists in using the rhythms of the spoken word in rap as a basis for improvising.

"I don't listen to saxophone players at the moment to learn to play my instrument, I listen to rappers. I listen to Methodman, Snoos, Tanq from The Roots [who appear on the album], Nas. I put their records on and it's their rhythms that I'm playing with. I haven't heard any

stratus seeker

seeing the appeal in that side of it at all. I'm really into intricate drum beats and how it's all put together and I can see endless possibilities for that in jungle."

It's not just the rhythmic impetus that has fired Williamson up. There's also a sense in which electronics have drastically expanded his notions of how music is constituted, which emerged during the time he spent working on Golde's *Timeless* album. "Hanging out with Golde I realised that all these weird sounds that you're hearing, futuristic sounds, are as relevant as notes and chords. They're as relevant as any notes I've ever done. Golde more than anybody, he hears all that shit."

musician play with that kind of rhythm. Redman, he's constantly rapping behind the beat — he doesn't rap on the beat at all. I do that with my playing."

Needless to say, this further re-injection of the oral tradition into jazz improvising (a return to its motivating source) has borne fascinating fruit. A hotwired lesson between disparate areas of contemporary black music, it puts the faded pop of most jazz-HipHop encounters to shame.

While there's something not quite fully achieved about *Journey To Truth*, the possible developments in Williamson's work look inviting. He plans to abandon any attempts at fusion under one banner and to work with separate groups, one jazz, the other funk-based. The latter project, *MODE* (Metric Organisation Of Diverse Elements, an M-Base styled collective), will draw in jungle, African music, rap — anything that catches Williamson's restless attention. As for jazz, he'll be playing that with his quartet. Worth seeing live — but don't clap the solo. □ *Journey To Truth* is out now on Verve

mouse.on.mars

iaora.tahiti

MOUSE ON MARS

the.new.album

out.now.cd.lp

IAORA TAHITI

pure.(cd)48

distributed.by.vital

too pure



Pram

Sargasso Sea

PURE (CD) 46

released 4th September

Another intriguing visitor to the Sargasso Sea is the Sea-Horse who "gallops" through the water with his head reared upright.

distributed by Vital

too pure

zowiet*france: deliver their post-Industrial molecular music from within a veil of anonymity
behind it lies a hive of philosophy and DIY experimentation. Interview by Phil England

secret ceremonies

"One thing that's been an underlying philosophical principle throughout the history of the group has been the anonymity of the personnel involved," explains a suitably faceless (at his own request) member of the Newcastle-based Industrial group zowiet*france. "We just wanted to say, 'Here's the music, there's no other information to go with it, and it either has an effect on you in particular ways or it doesn't. And we're not going to give you any clues to what they are because largely they are self-determined by the listener'."

The cult of invisibility with which the various members of zowiet*france have chosen to obscure their activities might appear confined, but it is an appropriate response to music which arrives as a series of internal soundworlds, that wanders between organic, non-linear lo-fi explorations and fake ethnicity, creating a world where nothing is locatable and everything is suggestion awaiting responsive imaginations.

14 persistent and prolific years of music-making at the periphery of industrial and post-industrial culture

have meant increasing attention for zowiet*france, to the point where they've become an influential reference point for New Edge musicians such as Autbreath and Mick Harris (Juli, Scorn).

The group's most recent work largely comprises contributions to compilations, including *Acidonom* (Virgin), *Out There (Pt. 1)*, *The SoundWorks Exchange (First Edition)* and most recently *Uploading (These)*. These tracks use technology more commonly associated with dance music and are in sharp contrast to the four 'lost' albums from 1986 which have just been reissued on the group's label, *Charm*.

Linked together in a series entitled *Charm, Ceremony, Chance, Prophecy*, these albums represent the peak of zowiet*france's homebuilt activities with most of the music created on self-made ad-hoc instruments, which are disguised and abstracted to the point of unrecognisability.

This disfiguring mechanism emerges from the group's radical relationship to the cheap technology they were forced to use at the time, out of relative poverty. Machines were wired up in complex ways to approximate effects produced by more expensive models, malfunctions such as crackle and dropout were encouraged and coaxed out of the technology to the point where processors became sound generators, and a variety of 'found objects' were adapted and utilised in a number of unorthodox ways.

"We weren't really musicians in any kind of regular sense at all. We've all been involved in some kind of regular musical background but we've abandoned all

that. What we're working with is just sound, and we see that there is a world full of sound and it's freely available for us to pick and choose what we want out of it, and we don't have any restrictions on that."

Over the years, any discernable changes in the group's aesthetic have been led by technology at least as much as by any changes in personnel. The next shift will involve probing the possibilities offered by editing with hard disk recording – manipulating minute fragments and exploring the 'molecular' structure of music and sound.

For zowiet*france, "the hook of the punk DIY ethic sank into us quite deeply as a principle." As well as building their own instruments, mastering technology, running their own label and producing their artwork, between 1982-87 the group also manufactured its own packaging. Their early releases came cased in cardboard, tissue paper, aluminium foil, roofing felt, ceramics and cigar boxes. "We wanted to make the packaging as interesting or unusual as the music itself but we reached a point in 86 or 87 where in order to fulfil the stock that our distributor wanted we would've had to work 40 hours a week."

For their CD releases, zowiet*france now have an aesthetic and (qualified) ecological preference for the Dappak over the standard, clumsy jewel case, and leave the more elaborate productions to Dutch label Stijlplaat, who recently packaged a reissue of *Popular Soviet Songs* using felt cut from black-market Red Army surplus caps and uniforms. (The packaging of the original cassette release included a leather gathered from the beach at Sellafield encased in concrete.)

zowiet*france's music might be purged of all obvious emotional signposts and signifiers, but that's not to say it doesn't reach for those elusive states of transcendence.

"One of the principles behind the music is that it's very intuitive. We try and dredge it up from very deep within our subconsciousness. It's very uncontested in that sense. In a way it's a music that anyone could do, of course it is, because the elements of it are probably within us all. And within that body of human existence are some other fundamental things as well, like belief systems and how they get focused. And we've drawn on elements of that in a very tinged and ambivalent way as influences for the music itself and as component elements in the music. No matter how sophisticated and technologically developed we become as a species, our evolution continues to be built upon a pre-existing base that doesn't go away. But there are still very low invariables in life apart from death." "Mists, Loony Tunes And Squid", "Crinoids, Gesture Signal Threat, A Flock Of Rotations And Assault And Mirage" are out now on *Charm Records* (through DOR). Unreleased is out now on *These Records* (through These).



**"FUNK IS IT'S OWN REWARD...
MAY I FRIGHTEN YOU ?"**

GEORGE CLINTON

FUNKCRONOMICON

OVER TWO YEARS IN THE MAKING, **FUNKCRONOMICON** MARKS A REUNION OF SOME OF THE BIGGEST FUNKMASTERS. **BILL LASWELL** HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER **GEORGE CLINTON**, **BOOTSY COLLINS**, **BERNIE WORRELL**, **SLY STONE**, **ROBBIE SHAKESPEARE**, **BUCKETHEAD**, **BOBBY BYRD**, **FRED WESLEY** IN A TRIBUTE ALBUM TO THE LATE, GREAT **EDDIE HAZEL OF FUNKADELIC**.

FUNKCRONOMICON DELVES INTO THE WORLD OF DEEPEST DARKEST FUNK ON AN EPIC **2CD / 2 TAPE** COLLECTION THAT DEFIES EARTHLY DESCRIPTION. IF YOU'VE NEVER FUNKED, BUY THIS ALBUM AND ASK **'WHAT DA HELL IS UP ?'**



AN AXIOM RELEASE



DISTRIBUTED BY VITAL
0 2 7 2 4 4 6 7 7 7



PHOTO: DAVID SLAPPA

that he has most often turned

How does Kuhn approach the composition of music that will be part of a multimedia space? "I want to be able to hear the sounds better. So what I do is take the sounds I like, isolate them, and then I create my ambience myself. So I use a lot of isolated sounds and put them together mostly on separate channels, and on separate sites also. It gives me the possibility to hear much more things simultaneously. That's my main motor for doing these things. So the question whether it's cultural sound or natural sound or instrumental is on the second level of importance.

I use the juxtapositions of having natural sounds and industrial sounds as opposite and surprising combinations. Also, another important thing for me is, because I do not tell stories in the things I do, I use sounds everybody knows and I first isolate them and put them together in not normal relationships. And by that of course I trigger the memories of the people. They have all their stories, but because there are

adventurous British organisational forces of Artangel. Other projects they've commissioned include Rachel Whiteread's cast of a terraced house, subsequently demolished by the bastions of East London good taste, a radio work by Gavin Bryars, and *Self Storage*, Brian Eno and Laurie Anderson's recent art infiltration of a North London industrial estate. Kuhn's new piece is cryptically called HG ("It's just HG. It means nothing else") and will be installed in the labyrinthine subterranean storage vaults of Clink Street on the south bank of the Thames.

The site-specific sound and visual installation is becoming the predominant involvement for Kuhn, although he still values his extensive upbringing in dance work and theatre. "I'm a complete auto-didact. I started when I was six years old to play theatre. When I was 14, I had my first rock 'n' roll band and when I finished school, I wanted to work in this field of electronic sound and I was pretty lucky. I started a job at the Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin and there I met Wilson after three years. Since then I do my own stuff."

Kuhn uses sound with the spatial awareness of a highly sensitive sculptor of spaces. The expansive spatial quality marks his works out from those of his fellow minimalists, such as Steve Reich or Philip Glass, whose works exist in a much more traditional, linear progression of musical time.

sound design sense

Hans Peter Kuhn provides the living forests of noise that accompany the installations of multimedia artist Robert Wilson. Robert Clark meets a master sound builder

On the CD accompanying the catalogue of *Visions*, a multimedia work designed by American artist Robert Wilson, wild animal yelps and bird squawks turn out to be human voices skillfully trained to states of near possession. This zoo serenade then flips over into laughter, blood-freezing hysterical outbursts and ghostly rattles. These animate sounds are elsewhere set in exquisite tension with the more angular noises of urban worlds. There are alarming invasions of smashing glass and an orchestration of obsessive metallic hammering. This is Hans Peter Kuhn's art of sound suggestions.

Kuhn is a sound designer. He is in London to set up a new installation with Wilson, his long-time colleague and collaborator. Wilson's high assemblage — not to mention high-profile — operas have made use of the creative forces of a number of familiar figures: Philip Glass (in the renowned *Einstein On The Beach*), William Burroughs and Tom Waits, but it's to Hans Peter Kuhn's precision with the language of decontextualised sound

sounds coming together that don't belong together, two stories come together that don't belong together. What happens is a third story appears and that's the story of the single person who comes to listen to it."

Most of the work Kuhn and Wilson have previously collaborated on is referred to as "theatre", but theatre in the European sense of a vibrant, open-ended space. "In Germany theatre is supposed to be one of the fine art forms," Kuhn explains. "There's a lot of experimental theatre that has been done, and what you call performance art happened also in the big theatres in Germany. There must be something that doesn't allow this kind of theatre being performed here."

But this new piece is not a theatre play, so it's really a different thing. I did this piece three years ago at Angel Square called *Five Floors*, which was a big installation, and I was amazed the reaction was wonderful. Many people came."

Like *Five Floors*, the new Kuhn/Wilson installation has been made possible by the almost uniquely

The other distinctive condition of installation is the fact that it's open to entry and exit at any point. "I don't care, I mean people stay five minutes, other people stay hours. It's much more your individual decision. I use sounds that are unnerving but I put them in contrast or in relationship so that they have a function within the piece. I'm not interested in provocation. I would invite people to come and simply listen, because I have the feeling that many people don't hear any more. Wherever you go, you have all this trash noise going on. Generally it's too much. Your brain blocks it off. So if there is something like an intention, that's the only intention, giving a chance to listen. I don't teach anybody to listen, I'm just giving a chance. I'm not the mastermind behind all this, there is no ideology. You can be there and experience the sensation of listening and looking." □ HG will be installed in the Clink Street vaults between 12 September and 15 October. See *Sounding Off* for details.



Steve Williamson

The long-awaited return of the master saxophonist

Journey to truth

Verve Forecast 526425-2

Featuring thirteen new tracks on the sharpest edge of new jazz/rap/hip hop

Out now on CD

Available from **ourprice**



As elder statesman of P-Funk, **George Clinton** refuses to dim with age. Here, he trades conspiracies with Ben Watson, and tells how he triumphed over the big, bad record industry

George Clinton speaks it like he struts it. His wild appearance on stage — multi-coloured, benign, conjugal as a cockatoo on acid — is not toned down in person, an interview could never be a mere public relations exercise. As Clinton's discography stretches to Sun Ra-like dimensions, it becomes obvious that meeting the man is likely to raise as many questions as it answers. How can one get a perspective on someone so gaudily determined to elude black and white definitions?

A P-Funk performance is itself a blinding cornucopia of talent, a jive-ass R&B roadshow that doesn't care about getting out of control. For instance, this July at The Grand in Clapham, South London, you could witness soaring psychedelic guitar features, a gospel-inflected singer named Belita Woods with the stage presence of an Esther Philips or Lyn Collins (lie awesome), street-sharp raps from Clinton's son Shawn, stabbing horn solos from Greg Boyer and Bernie Cowan, improvised left tip graphics from artist Pedro Bel (scribbled continually, held aloft and hurled into the audience. "PLAY ATTENTION!" said it all), notorious audience singalongs to warped, food-for-thought slogans. Throughout, George Clinton presided, interrupted, capoled, directed, as a capacity audience went beserk in the peculiarly amiable manner of cultists receiving their favoured communion.

P-Funk is brash, demonstrative, propagandistic — and very funny. Unlike the insinuating swing of Go-Go, Washington DC's brand of black roots funk, P-Funk is designed for public statements, it wants to be as global as Coca-Cola. In a world where commercial success generally implies subordination to official concerns of mass taste, P-Funk is an eruption of what-the-hell freedom, a lesson in black music history that manages to be militant and irresponsible at once. A few days before that Clapham show, I met Clinton in London and asked him how he kept everything so fresh yet seamless.

"We've done it so many years now it just comes naturally. It really works well because I can flow from so many musicians — I never do the same way twice, on different nights different ones feel like they wanna play more. And if it's starting to get too tight and too good, I'll do something that'll fuck it up. We're doing some really important change and everyone's ready to hit it, and I'll say, 'Hold it!' And they'll be like, 'What the fuck is he doing now?' Now they've got to wake up, because they can basically do it in their sleep, they've been doing it for so long. Now they have to figure out, 'How do we get back to that cue at the same time?' So it becomes a brand new thing each time."

It comes alive again?

"It makes it very alive again. If they're real good they'll get out of it without stumbling — it's order and chaos at the same time. We've been playing the same songs for 25 years, and you tend to evolve them. We had some people who wanted to sample the songs just like they were in the beginning, so we had to actually go back and learn the songs just like we started out, real simple. It made it interesting to the band because they'd never played it like that for the most part, they'd come in playing our most advanced versions. When we run into young rock 'n' roll bands that's copied us, they're playing it just like the record was, and all of a sudden you say, 'So that's how it really was!' [Red Hot Chili Peppers taught us "Free Your Mind" and "Funcky Dollar Bill" — we never even played that on stage originally. We had two days rehearsal with them for the Grammys, and they taught us our songs!"]

In a period when the music industry has reduced most live performances to touring adverts for the new album, this insistence on keeping music live and improvised has a heroic aspect, almost like the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

"That's what I tell the record companies when they say, 'You can't do this, you can't do that.' I say it's like Duke Ellington's Orchestra or Count Basie's Orchestra — it's a band and I have a lot of sidemen. They like to make it sound like I've done something really sneaky or dubious because I have Parliament or Funkadelic, but they're just names for the band — and I have a lot of sidemen. And they can be on all the records they want to be on."

rainbow

WAKKI





George Clinton puts a lot into his records: they salt the obsessional world of the fan, someone still building their own world-picture, rather than the cool ambience of the adult consumer, someone requiring a prop for a sophisticated lifestyle. Cool implies streamlining, impersonality, professionalism. In contrast, Clinton's albums are a barrage of puzzles, jokes, references, zildies. They don't flatter the know-it-all; they demand curiosity, involvement, thought; they protest the alienation of "product." Again and again, Funkadelic and Parliament albums emphasize the material facts of their realization: record label promotion, censorship, media scares and scandals. And again and again Clinton returns the interview to talk of politics. Not politics as some pompous, holier-than-thou crusade, but politics as urgent newscast, dangerous truths they don't want you to hear, scumous facts excavated from the mountains of media bullshit. Talking to him is like studying one of his record covers. It's a cascade of information and images which forces you to examine your preconceptions, shock your whitey propriety. Clinton's new album, *Dope Dogs*, has a cover featuring a dog sniffing up a woman's skirt, while the back carries personal attacks on George Bush, Oliver North, plus a rogue's gallery of black "sell out" politicians. Clinton does not see himself as a singer or musician so much as a media agitator, a persistent irritant, a subversive.

"Information — in-fow-mation! When they were making money off the rappers, it was cool, but when it got to the point that someone was using the concert to give us some information, they clomp down on it... We're sniffing out the truth, I tell you." Clinton sings from "A US Customs Coast Guard Dope Dog (Hyper Mix)", a song which accuses the American government — and George Bush in particular — of running the very drug traffic they denounce so shrilly. "Old Mac Uncle had some drugs, CIA I-O."

"Won't he get into trouble saying these things?"

"Not if you look stupid and say it funny!"

George Clinton assumes the posture of the clown in order to say things a sober citizen would be sued for. Dazzled by the comic book lunacy with which he surrounds himself, some commentators have attempted to "read" Clinton as a propagator of black science fiction, and P-Funk as a utopian cry from the heart of the diaspora, a protest against the Caucasian chalk circle of cyberspace technology. Actually, satirical sociology and provocatively reductive sex link beneath each cartoon rocket and "motherhood" reference. Clinton's obscene tongue-busters and wordplay mock transcendence, his infantile regressions celebrate the realities of cradle and courtship, an invert-virus to the fascist techno-worship of Ayn Rand and L Ron Hubbard. Far from pursuing the out-of-body Platonism of Ambient, George Clinton wants to get you back into your body, in all its funsome fulsomeness. "I'm the product of a Platonian experiment! We rub each others' cheeks! We sniff each others' snats! We tug each others' leash when we find each other in heat! We scratch each others' fleas and put each other at ease! When in Dogtown, do as dogs do."

Clinton's ability to relish the musical and sexual circus — while using it to comment on all kinds of unsavoury truths about America — is inspirational, a blueprint for an engaged and critical art. His statements have a personable, devil-may-care directness, no "tactful" silences, no "discreet" compliance, no coyneess about naming names. He tells it like it is. This corresponds to the hearty, value for money sweat of his live concerts. He is aware that his values are not shared by those who control the purse strings.

"It might mean I get no record deal sometimes. That's what killed my last record on [Prince's] Paisley Park [label], *Hey Man Smell My Finger*, because it had "Martial Law" on there. Prince had paid \$40,000 for two videos, Ice Cube and Dr Dre were going to do them, [then] Warners closed the company down. We had just moved into these offices, 1999, Avenue Of The Stars, and they put locks on the door. The only thing I could think of was that martial law was really something they didn't want us to talk about."

It's a truism that modern art is meant to disrupt the passivity of the spectacle, empower the spectator. Such ideas too often turn into complex theoretical justifications that merely lead to yet more artist obscurantism. Clinton presents the argument without using such art jargon. In fact, he invents his own.

"I'm no preacher, I'm no guru, that's just my opinion of it. If you think about it, you have to come to your own conclusion. You might get out of it more than what I put in — I just max it in there. I don't tell you what to think about it. Because they have what they call Social Engineering in operation everywhere. They engineer our lifestyles so we come to certain conclusions, it's pre-arranged for you. They give you a list of options when they take a public opinion survey, you've got to answer the questions in the space right here — the definitions are all narrowed down to this, so when they ask you, you can only answer from here to here, from there to there, like the rest of it don't exist, so they're still manipulating it, telling you what to think. I don't believe none of that. Some dumb question, 'What you think about Affirmative Action [the US phrase for Positive Discrimination]?' It's fucked up, anyway you look at it, because it's designed to piss somebody off. Whether you have it or don't have it, that's not all that there is. If you just take some of that fucking money that they spend making these bombs, you wouldn't need no Affirmative Action in there, everyone would have a job. They buy all these planes and missiles and before they finish making them they're obsolete. They don't take the planes apart and use the parts to make a new plane, they set them out in the desert. They won't let you fly over them most of the time, but they've got thousands of planes and trucks and tanks out in the desert, obsolete before they finished them — a whole fleet can sit there and rust. They want someone to go in and make a new set — and get a kickback from that."

Clinton is an astute observer of the way that sexual morality is used as a weapon against those who criticise the American political establishment. For instance, he is convinced that Michael Jackson and Richard Gere were both targeted for political reasons. With juvenile Hollywood seeking a return to the 50s — sex as something "nice" girls don't do, suburbia as a haven from urban vice — his hedonism, his express commitment to sex and drugs and rock and roll, constitutes a defence of core 60s values. He says, with disarming frankness, "I tell the fans, I'm not your guru, because I'm trying to get some pussy, you'll catch me trying to get some dope..." He adds with

a smile. "Not heavy dope?"

Clinton is also acute when assessing the situation in England. On his visit he was warned by his record company that London's East End was full of racist thugs:

"When we was in the east part of London they were telling us how bad the skinhead was over there, and I said, 'Do they have jobs?' I don't doubt that they're passed off at anybody who moves in there. Not that that's right, but that goes with property. It offends them to see another nationality come in with all the stores — it's not right, but they're poor, they ain't got no education to understand no shit like that, so they set you up and walk away and leave you, and you live out the rest of it like you were programmed — it's called Social Engineering."

Rather than moralizing in a high-minded way, Clinton's anti-racism demands a cross-race challenge to the rich and those in power:

"White middle America is just now finding out that it's not blacks on welfare that's their problem, it's not the gays, it's not pro- or anti-abortion. Middle America is just now finding out that the people in power don't give a fuck about them either. That Oklahoma City bombing was very fucking strange. I read this book called *Behold A Pale Horse* by William Cooper. He was a de-briefer in naval intelligence. He went AWOL in the late 60s and he faxed a manuscript of the book to about 1500 entertainers and media people. Now the book is out, but I had the manuscript since 1987. It says the Wall of Berlin is coming down. Russia was going pop! And people would start blowing up airports and buildings in the United States. They were going to tell you that it was terrorists that did it, and it was going to be the government themselves who were doing it. On page 160 it says that Oklahoma will be the test city for the new world order martial law concept — this was written in 1987! So when the World Trade Center was blown up it was very suspicious — and then the Waco incident and the Oklahoma bombing. He said they're gonna attack the patriots and wear them out, and pit them against other people by calling them white supremacists, when most of them are just plain pissed off because they lost their farm. Think about it! That's a lot of people. It's not like a few black people this time, it's your average American farmer, and when you do it to him, he's not going to roll over. They're gonna pick up the flag and the Bible and it's revolution time. By calling them white supremacists and those names... Too many of them were just regular straight people who were not that yet. When it got really stupid they were saying that black street gangs were going to help the police. They're already pissed at the blacks because of the ones on welfare, but by the time they hear that! And they make the blacks mad by calling them white supremacists. You've got the makings of a nice little war going on. And they'll keep each other busy while whoever did it creeps on off!"

Clinton is so well-informed and attentive to facts, it's hard to figure out quite where his observations blur into full-blown fantasy. I told him of the monumental statue of Michael Jackson currently overlooking Berlin's Alexanderplatz, a pastiche Stalin returned to haunt East Berliners. He roared with laughter:

"Well, it gave a lot of people jobs to build it. I mean, I'm cracking up at that! Because the people who did it to East Germany, they are the same people — communists, fascists, capitalists, it's the same people. It's the bankers, the few bankers around the world. They were around during the second world war, they financed both sides of the war. They don't care who got hurt. You figure they have to belong to some race that's evolving this stuff. They belong to two or three of the races and they financed it — it's real weird, the World Bank, the Illuminati."



"I tell the fans, I'm not your guru, because I'm trying to get some pussy, you'll catch me trying to get some dope."

The idea that the entire course of the 20th century has been the hollow clash of minorities, its cataclysmic events mere episodes in a script, is a somewhat simplistic reduction of the complexities of historical reality. Like many radical American artists, Clinton is prone to conspiracy theory. It is not so much black science fiction that he propagates, as the visionary paranoia of a William Burroughs or Philip K. Dick. However, what Clinton extracts from Cooper — the book is actually a careless farrap of recycled UFOlogy, JFK speculation and other nut-house stuff, including a whole reprint of *The Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion*, the notorious anti-semitic forgery that Hitler quotes in *Mein Kampf* — is something different. He notes that Louis Farrakhan's journal has advertised Cooper's book, but rather than pursuing the anti-semitic tack one might expect, Clinton gives it all a distinctly socialist twist. For him, the success of the book — it is popular among commie-hating farmers as well as radical young blacks — is a sign that the American working class is beginning to put the real enemy in their sights.

"You have to educate the people and tell them racism's not cool, but at the same time you have to give them some jobs. You can only show who the real enemy is by helping them with their situation. Like Castro — he didn't want to be no communist! It was the only place to go against the people who just wanted his country to be full of Las Vegas casinos, when the people in his country couldn't even go into the casinos."

According to Clinton, Michael Jackson was piloried by an establishment that despises him for challenging their right to speak for the 'kids':

"Michael's a real kid, he really is a real kid. I've known him since he was eight. He gets pussy. He gets pussy! I've known that for the longest time. He may not have it, but he's crossing his fingers when he says that. This time he actually said, 'You're afraid I'm going to be powerful and be a diplomat! Look at that video for "Scream" — that has to be scary, even though Russia is supposedly no longer a threat. He's saying, "Okay, you were afraid of me before, now really be afraid of me! I'm going to play with what you're afraid I might be, which is a diplomat." Mohammed Ali got locked up, got sent to the army for talking to Gaddafi, trying to be a diplomat. They don't allow you to be a diplomat if it's with people the government is not into being diplomatic with. If you get that much power... Look what happened to John Lennon!"

And so it goes. The man should have a chat show. In one hour George Clinton told me enough about American politics to write a book. The FBI has been infiltrating the street gangs and causing inter-gang warfare just as they did with the Black Panthers in the 60s (accusations which sounded just as wild back then have now been documented by agents provocateurs who have published memoirs). The beating of the white truck driver in the Rodney King riots was a set up (Clinton's analysis of camera angles is riveting). Kurt Cobain was used as an advertisement for heroin by an establishment terrified of the Lollapalooza ferment running a repeat of the 60s. The Richard Gere scandal was scripted by the same people that tried to bring down Michael Jackson, all because he was talking to Tibet's Dalai Lama at a time when the American government wanted to ingratiate itself with China — "and sell 40 billion hamburgers!"

Whatever you may think of Clinton's claims, it is great to hear a pop star who refuses to kowtow to 'political correctness', someone capable of using the music industry to say things which are progressive yet heretical. "Our next album has three titles," he tells me: *"TAPFOM: The Awesome Power For The Operation Of Mothership, Venues and SEAC: Social Engineered And Anarchically-Induced Chaos: Those are the concepts."*

All this from a man who put Valerie Singleton and the Blue Peter dog on the back cover of his last album. Barking mad, but talking sense. □

Dope Dogs is out now on Hot Hands (through Total). George Clinton is also featured on Bill Laswell's new Funkanomicron project, which is out now on Asom (through Island), and appears in the Channel 4 documentary Mothership Connection, to be broadcast on 28 August.

The story of the first electronic instruments is as twisted and circuitous as their primitive, labyrinthine wiring. Mark Sinker goes in search of these often bizarre creations and their inventors, including the best known of all: **Léon Therémín**

singing the body electric

"Music plus electricity equals the sound of the 20th century" — Joseph Schlinger, 1918

They are near-mythical beasts, these pioneering, half-forgotten electric-electronic instruments, with their excellently strange names — the *siaerlon*, the *spharophon*, the *choralcello*, the *gnome*, the *panorad*, the *trautonium*, the *crox sonore*, the *mellerton*, the *hellerton*, the *orgatron*, the *consonata*, the *neo-bechstein* — and stories clustering round them, many facts not exactly reliable.

The first and most fabulous monster is Thaddeus Cahill's *telharmonium*. 200 tons, 60 feet across, taking up a whole floor and the basement below. It looked, surviving pictures tell us, like a church organ mated with a weaving loom. Cahill, a Canadian, built it in Holyoke, Massachusetts, partially funded by the New England Electric Music Company — whoever they might have been — it cost a then-phenomenal \$200,000, and was moved in 1906 to *Telharmonium Hall* in New York. The idea was to transmit "*Telharmonium*" across America, to hotels, restaurants, theatres and private homes, via local telephone exchanges. The *telharmonium* itself was a kind of keyboard-operated dynamo organ, the bulk of the machine consisted of vast toothed gears on engine-driven spinning shafts which caused alternating currents in batteries of magnets. There were no loudspeakers in those days — radio was only five years old, and Lee De Forest's audion tube, which amplified signals many thousand-fold, wouldn't exist for at least another decade — so it fed straight into the telephone system. Unfortunately, it needed huge voltages and caused interference over the rest of the telephone network, such as it then was — so that one day an enraged businessman burst in, broke it up and threw the machinery into the Hudson river, or so the story goes.

Actually there were no less than three *telharmoniums*, spread over some 20 years: the first Cahill had started in 1895 in Washington DC, patented in 1897, finished in 1900, the Holyoke-NYC model was the second, a third, begun in 1908, finished in 1911 and certainly still in use in 1916. But by the mid-



teens, radio broadcasts into the home were the coming thing, and the project went broke for lack of subscribers (though a similar device, the choraleo, contemporary, smaller, more obscure, is reported to still have been in use in the 50s).

For a short while, however, the telharmonium was big news. A story in *McGraw's Magazine*, "New Music For An Old World", brought it to the attention of Ferruccio Busoni, a virtuoso classical pianist and critical intellectual, Italian by birth, German by temperament, respected across all Europe. Busoni (whose pupils included Edgard Varèse) cited the telharmonium in a polemic he was then writing (for some reason he calls it the "dynamophone"). His 1907 *Sketch Of A New Aesthetic Of Music* proposed that music pass beyond its 19th century framings — harmony as the possible combination of a mere 12 notes, a highly selective and conventional instrumentation — to embrace the "infinite" gradations within the octave structures. "The question is important and imperious, how and on what these tones are to be produced. Fortunately, while busied with this essay, I received from America direct and authentic intelligence which solves the problem in a simple manner. I refer to an invention by Dr Thaddeus Cahill. He has constructed a comprehensive apparatus which makes it possible to transform an electric current into a feed and mathematically exact number of vibrations."

At which point Busoni hurtles intoxicatingly into an airborne rhetoric that flatters Cahill's 200 ton apparatus: "Who has not dreamt that he could float on air? And firmly believed his dream to be reality? Let us take thought, how music may be restored to its primitive, natural essence, let us free it from architectonic, acoustic and aesthetic dogmas, let it be pure invention and sentiment, in harmonies, in forms, in tone-colours (for invention and sentiment are not the prerogative of melody alone), let it follow the line of the rainbow and ve with the clouds in breaking sunbeams, let Music be naught else than Nature mirrored by and reflected from the human breast, for it is sounding air and floats above and beyond the air, within Man himself as universally and absolutely as in Creation entire."

As it is to the point, or ether is. The technologies Busoni invokes are simultaneously magical and domesticated, that is the instant transmission of sound — of the voice, of consciousness, of will — over vast distances. Today, such technologies — radio, telecommunications — are so familiar it's hard to recapture a sense of them anew, but in the early years of this century they were the essence of sorcery.

In 1907, radio was still largely dedicated to the transmission of Morse Code signals for shipping. The telephone, some 30 years old, was for speech — though concerts had been transmitted (in stereo, no less) down phone lines from the Paris Opéra to select homes in 1881 by one Clément Adler, and in Budapest in 1893 by the Telefonhírmondó company, a similar system, called the electrophone, was established in London in the 1880s.

But telephone earpieces make for lousy speaker systems, even today, and not enough punters seemed to want to pay for this early Oel-A-Tune service to fund the necessary improvements. (The telharmonium's huge and problematic voltages were connected to its apparently impressive volume, which was said to be as loud and clear as an orchestra.)

Around 1917, several Paris-based radio engineers — among them cellist and telegraphist Maurice Martenot, engineer Armand (or maybe Joseph) Gœtzel and a Russian émigré called Nikolay Obukhov — discovered that the mechanical howl of a poorly-tuned radio receiver could be affected by human movement close by. But no one found a satisfactory way to harness this phenomenon to a keyboard: a player's hands interfered with the note produced by the pressed key. Of course, it was wartime, and other matters were perhaps pressing.

Nonetheless, within the year a young Moscow engineer, Lev Sergeyevich Termen, had solved the problem: he simply dispensed with the keyboard and waved his hands through the air. The aetherophone, he called it, and it invoked the spirit of radio, the very ghost of the wireless age.

It was a polished wooden box with a whisker antenna poking up into the air at one end, a ring of metal sprouting at right angles from the other. Sound was produced by the player moving his hands through the electromagnetic field set up by the two protruding bits of wire, a manual vibrator of the ether itself. A telephone earpiece, perhaps with a cardboard horn attached to it, emitted an electronic buzz or whine

The sound was far from unpleasant, sobbing and swooning its way through recognisable tunes.

Lenin had the new instrument demonstrated to him in 1921, and loved it. By 1923, Termen was a roving ambassador for Soviet ingenuity and vision, visiting France, Germany, Britain and the US. In fact, he was so successful, and so many imitations of his device appeared, with similarly clinical sci-fi geek names, that he decided to change not only his invention's name but his own. He became Professor Léon Theremin, and it became an advert for him: the thereminico, soon shortened to the theremin.

Léon had discussed possible improvements to the instrument with Maurice Martenot in Paris in 1923, and Martenot went on to build his own ondes musicales, it debuted around 1928, at first using some kind of tugged string mechanism. A Danish bandleader called Jens Wary built his own aetherophone, dubbed it the staerofon, and began touring. In Germany (or possibly in London) Jorg Mager — working independently on "radio-howl" instruments — had invented his elektrotron in 1921, issuing a pamphlet, *A New Epoch In Music Through Radio*.

Perhaps influenced by Wary, the elektrotron subsequently became the spherophon. Early models were worked with a dial (the kurbelspherophon) Mager was interested in microtonal music and initially felt keyboards reinforced diatonic tonality. Subsequently, he developed a keyboard system which allowed for quarter-tones, the klavaterspherophon. Finally, he devised a polyphonic version, the partiturophon (this, in other words, was a version that played more than one note at a time, which organs and the telharmonium could, and the rest of the above could not). In pictures, we see Mager is a portly, balding man, and that his klavaterspherophon (or is it the partiturophon?) looks like a church organ, complete with multiple keyboards, a pedal board and tone-stops. An earlier picture, of the kurbelspherophon and its knobs, is rather more enigmatic: resting partly on a table beside him and partly on a stand in front of him, it looks nothing like the elegant theremin. Mager appears to be operating a small lever on the stand, and reaching beside him to turn a dial. His research gave him a degree of success in the established music world: he was contracted in 1931 by Bayreuth to recreate the bell-tones in Parsifal (apparently he amplified some Javanese gongs). "At the short-lived peak of his career," wrote Hugh Davies in *The Grove Dictionary Of Musical Instruments*, "he was given the use of a





Clara Rockwell at the theremin

small castle in Darmstadt, to which he moved in 1929, and where he founded the *Studiengesellschaft Für Elektro-Akustische Musik*. (Mager died in 1939, and none of his machines survived the Allied bombing of Germany. Still, is it mere coincidence that after the war Darmstadt became a centre for experimental and electronic music?)

By 1929, Nikolay Obukhov had built his cross sonore, a theremin in all but name, according to most sources, though visual descriptions are intriguing. "A cross about four feet high surmounting a globe about two feet in diameter." More routinely thereminoid were the *electrone*, the *elektronische Zauberorgel* and the *ethonium*. Thérémín's experiments with something like a cello fingerboard — to replace air-gestures — had been taken up by his compatriots back in Moscow, resulting variously in the *violen*, the *sonar*, the *eminton* and the *elvodin*. Back in Paris, one René Bertrand, a close friend of Varèse, applied Mager's dial idea to his *dynaphone* and exhibited it in Barcelona, Prague and Budapest. Marienot picked up a tip from Thérémín and renamed the *ondes* in honour of himself: the *ondes marienot* was adapted to use a fingerboard, or, as it's often described, misleadingly but attractively, a 'ribbon'; it was designed to facilitate microtonal scales (in particular the finely divided scales of Indian *raga*).

Less successful, despite similar principles and aims — in particular this same abiding but largely unsatisfied obsession with non-standard pitch-divisions — were Langer and Halmag's *emison*, the *mellerton*, which divided the octave into ten rather than eight steps, and, not to be confused with it, Bruno Heiberger and Peter Letes's *helierton*, which had four touchtone fingerboards made, gloriously, of leather.

In the late 1920s, Dr Friedrich Trautwein, a professor of acoustics at Köln, exhibited his *trautonium* (its monophonic fingerboard, originally based on the *helierton*'s, evolved into a stretched wire, which was pushed down to contact the surface beneath it). Photos of a 1930 performance of one of composer Paul Hindemith's seven trios for *trautonium* could as well be pictures from inside some newly automated 20s office: the machines which three men are sitting at resemble typewriters more than anything else (larger models favoured the telephone-switchboard look).

By now, with radios, microphones and electrical phonographic recording commonplace, loudspeaker technology was pretty much evolved. The use of photoelectric cells to generate sound — basic to the working of the film soundtrack — was also being translated into instrumentation: for instance, émigré Ivan Eremeyev's 1932 *gnome* worked on an electromagnetic/photoelectric tone-wheel principle.

From the late 20s onwards, the ways in which electricity could be applied to the routine amplification or improvement of standard instrumentation proliferated. Jörg Mager's assistants Oskar Vierling and Harald Bode worked on electrically amplified violins and pianos (the *neo-bechstein*) and electronic organs, as did

countless others, on such makes as the *Rangertone*, the *Orgatron* (which was bought up by Wurlitzer, the jukebox manufacturer), the *Allen*, the *Baldern*, the *Consonata*, the *Leslie* and the legendary *Hammond*. The science fiction writer and radio-parts magazine editor Hugo Gernsback built several electric pianos in the mid-20s, among them the *staccatophone* and the *pinorad*. (In producing these instruments, Gernsback may have been elaborating on a 1916 patent of Lee De Forest's for musical uses of the audion tube: a photo of the *pinorad* shows it to resemble a



Oskar Sala with Alfred Hitchcock

drinks cabinet full of big light bulbs)

In 1929, Edouard Coupleux, an organ designer, joined forces with Armand Givélet to build the Coupleux-Givélet organ. This was an early "synthesizer," in that it could be programmed like a player piano with punched paper rolls. Somewhere in the American Deep South in the late 20s, the brother of the World War One air ace Eddie Richenbacher had built a funny little metal steel guitar and fitted pick-ups to it — Country music would never be the same.

Last July, at an exhibition and conference at the American Centre in Paris, called Glo-bal Tekno One, the Futurist Luigi Russolo was reclaimed as the rightful ancestor and visionary

precursor of all things rave. This is not entirely unfair, since Futurism was very much about the celebration of machine-age sensation. But despite the fact that Marconi had put Italy on the map in terms of radio technology, Russolo's instruments — the roars, squeakers and honkers of his intonarumori, also lost during the war — seem to have been home-made contraptions of wood and canvas, though some may have had small electric motors. (An electric or electronic instrument is one where the sound is a direct product of the translation of electromagnetic waves into soundwaves. A church organ that pumps its bellows by electricity is not, in any essential sense, an electric organ, nor is one whose key release mechanism is electrified. In both cases, the means of producing sound is still the vibration of air in a pipe.)

So why is Russolo venerated today as one of the founding fathers of Techno, while the likes of Trautwein and Gernsback, for instance, languish in obscurity? It might have something to do with this: the Italian became emblematic for a technologised present that turns its face towards the future partly because he rejected the musical conventions and routines of his day. By contrast, the inventors/performers of much of the exotic musical flora and fauna so far mentioned here had a rather timid willingness to adapt to established rules, which is probably what prevented them taking root.

Initially, some kind of coming together between these instruments and a new type of music that probed their sonic possibilities seemed possible. Certainly works were written specially for many of them. In the USSR, the theremin had made its concert debut in 1924, performing Andrei Peshchenko's *Symphonic Mystery* for theremin and full orchestra, while Vladimir Solokov is said for a while to have composed for nothing else.

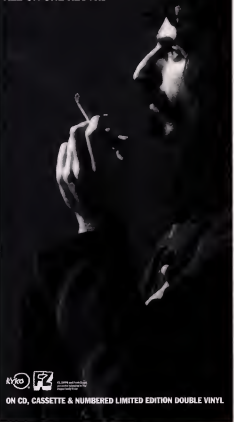
Theremin's countryman Joseph Schillinger wrote his *First Arphonic Suite* for the theremin in 1929. Arthur Honegger wrote a ballet — *Roses De Métal* — for three of Bertrand's dynaphones and piano. Varèse incorporated two theremins in his 1934 *Écarteral* (however the published score replaces them with two ondes martenots, which were used in its first performance in 1961). In 1935, Percy Grainger — another Busoni disciple — wrote *Free Music #1* for four theremins, the following year he composed *Free Music #2* for six, and he went on to build some kind of punch-card programmable free music organ. Aaron Copland used a theremin in his opera *The Second Hurricane* (1936). Charles Ives added an optional theremin to his Fourth Symphony, and helped finance the rhythmacon, a machine for generating rhythms which classical percussionists couldn't cope with. It was designed by Thérémín and composer Henry Cowell, and used by Cowell in his *Rhythmicana* (but this was not

STRICTLY COMMERCIAL FRANK ZAPPA

THE
BEST
OF

Featuring
**PEACHES EN REGALIA
DANCIN' FOOL
BOBBY BROWN GOES DOWN
VALLEY GIRL**

**& 15 OTHER SONGS
YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED ...
ALL ON ONE RECORD**



ON CD, CASSETTE & NUMBERED LIMITED EDITION DOUBLE VINYL



actually performed until 1971. Intriguingly, a new CD issued by Mute, John Cage's *Rhythmicon*, uses the machine's composing principles in a contemporary setting).

The trautonium won itself a degree of support within Germany thanks to Richard Strauss and Hindemith: besides his seven trons, Hindemith wrote a concerto for it. Strauss lost interest and Hindemith was forced to leave Germany by the coming of Nazism, but though the Nazis had active interest only in large-scale electric instruments, suitable for large public occasions, the trautonium somehow survived.

Ravel gave permission for the first movement of his string quartet to be rescored for martenot. Honegger's *Les Mille Et Une Muets* (1937) used four. Olivier Messiaen's *Fêtes Des Belles Eaux* used six, while his massive *Turangalla Symphony* is an ondes soloist's showcase. (A version of the theremin, activated by on-stage dancing, the terpsitone, was built in 1932 and used in several ballets.)

RCA manufactured theremins from 1929 ("Not a radio! Not a phonograph! Not like anything you have ever heard or seen!"), but even though Thérèse was then regularly touring and lecturing in the States, they only sold about 300. 200 trautoniums were built, but only a handful were sold — perhaps less than 20 — and most of the rest recalled and dismantled. Ondes martenots were manufactured individually, to order only. Most of the others only ever existed as prototypes, long since traded for scrap, or smashed by falling bombs.

However, electric organs — using mechanisms that are direct descendants, of the telharmonium — were becoming commonplace by the 40s, in cinemas, in churches, in the home. It was no longer simply the case that electrification was a bar to popularity. The problem was that few of the above instruments had any such migrated role. Of course new works could be written for them, but just like microtonal composition (also briefly fashionable

during these years) these were intruders on the standard classical repertoire, and very much hostage to their own untuned quality. And as many as may have been written, how many were ever performed? A registered score does not a public performance signify — or even an extended rehearsal. Of the above compositions, only *Ecotonal* and *Turangalla* could be said to have won a place in the international postwar repertoire.

Despite the microtones, the 30s were a backward-looking time for music. The likes of Varèse, Granger and Cowell were far more revered than respected, whether as Futurists, as musical Bolsheviks, or as destroyers of magnificent tradition for the sake of trendy machine-age progression. And performance on the new instruments, as Cowell's pupil John Cage complained angrily in 1937, was almost apologetic about its very novelty. "When Thérèse provided an instrument with genuinely new possibilities, thereminists did their utmost to make the instrument sound like some old instrument, giving it sickeningly sweet vibrato, and performing on it, with difficulty, masterpieces of the past." (Thérèse's own favoured repertoire was not a help here for that. 1921 demonstration of the instrument to Lenin, he'd played Mikhail Glinka's "The Lark", a sentimental oldie and mouldy even then.)

If that proved that the classical orchestra is simply an impossibly conservative institution, it would have to give up too much of its sense of timeless, uniformed, revered self to allow for

any such changes. Though ragtime and jazz had conclusively demonstrated how limited its expressive range was, they had themselves filled the very gaps they proved existed and these were musics with a built-in relationship to an audience. A new instrument needed to do more than arrive, cap in hand, and beg to sit in it had to create a meaningful dramatic space around it, and force its acceptance on its own terms, by means — as it were — of its paying fan club. The unlimited new arenas of the mixed studio and the recorded surface allowed the drum kit, the saxophone and the electric guitar just such a space which is why they became the foremost 'new' instruments of the century, numerically and creatively (and also why Cage and disciples more or less stopped writing for established instruments).

“The idea was to transmit ‘Telharmony’ across America, to hotels, restaurants, theatres and private homes, via local telephone exchanges”



The ondes martenot lived on — Hugh Davies believes that more than a thousand works have been composed for it, as well as ballets, theatre and film music — but only in France. Honegger and Messiaen, as well as Milhaud, Koellin and Jolivet, all turned their patriotic pens to composing for this magnificent local device, but no one else did.

Trautonium virtuoso and proselytiser Oskar Sala, who later modified Trautwein's instrument into his own modular-trautonium, also bartered a tricky postwar position — survival under Nazism impressed few in those years — into a useful pop cultural role. By 1960 he was working with Hitchcock on the soundtrack of *The Birds*. Beyond this, his modular-trautonium remains strictly a German thing.

(By way of illustration, Sala and his instrument have recently been 'adopted' by the Frankfurt-based Ambient composer Pete Namlook. Namlook's Fax label has just issued a CD, *My Favourite Instrument*, which features Sala performing his own compositions for trautonium — intriguing, but he's no Varèse — and Namlook has combined a monophonic trautonium with a new computer program which he says

SINGLE CELL ORCHESTRA®



DEAD VENT 7

available on cd & limited vinyl

also available: *degritz* - *lunch shop david mauling* • *cd record ep* - *solitropo* • *Electronic membrane ep* - *no-shen* **reflective US** by **STAFF** and **STAFF** **STAFF**

NEUROPOLITIQUE

"are you now or have you ever been ?"

"a landmark album blending cuban salsa,
electronic minimalism,
abstract drumming, drugs & sexual perversion"

elec 22 lp - cd **out now**



As One

REFLECTIONS On reflections



elec 23 lp cd **out now**

the essential works of as one reinterpreted on one classic album by

carl craig :: scanner :: balil
urban tribe :: terrace :: elegy
russ gabriel :: max 404 :: b12
autocreation :: blue binary

generates "subharmonic chords and tones")

Pre-empting the use of a trautonium in *The Birds*, from the late '30s theremins were more in demand in Hollywood than they'd ever been in vanguard classicism: the instrument's weirdly unplaceable expressionism supplied alien soundtrack and jittery sensation to psychodramas and sci-fi shockers alike, including *King Kong*, *The Lost Weekend*, Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, *The Day The Earth Stood Still* and *Forbidden Planet*. From there it graduated to pop/couter-culture status, supplying strange atmosphere to songs by The Beach Boys and Led Zeppelin (in pop, "Good Vibrations" and "Whole Lotta Love" remain the iconic theremin moments), Captain Beefheart, Todd Rundgren, The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, the sublimely named Lothar And The Hand People (Lothar being the name of the group's theremin) and, a generation later, Portsmouth, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Pere Ubu, whose David Thomas plays a small, hand-held theremin, Bruce Woolley (I), Paul Weller and so on and so on.

Why, out of this long list of potential non-keyboard devices, is it the theremin that has landed safe in posterity? The point must be this: unlike the theremin in Hollywood (or, in a parallel world, the electric organ, which was widely used at a very uncelebrated level), or the electric guitar, which in the '40s and '50s exploded into pop, most of the non-keyboard devices mentioned here failed to make an impression in the realm of the non-virtuoso amateur. Those that did were rejected by most 'serious' composers for that very reason: that's to say, post-war avant-gardeists wanted bigger, better, computer-controlled composing machinery, not some silly electric whining-stick that makes everyone think of gang busters from Mars.

The fact is that any instrument with no institutional grounding of second- and third-ranks, no special reserve army of amateurs, will wither and vanish how can it not? Specialist virtuosos may arrive to tackle the one-off novelty — the theremin's Clara Rockwell, the ondes martenot's Jeanne Loniol, the trautonium's Oskar Sala — but there's no meaningful level of entry at the ground floor, and, what's worse, no fallback possibility of hack careerism if things don't turn out (again, with the exception of the theremin). Why would any child — let alone a large enough group of them to ensure momentum — choose to begin learning to play such devices? Only from-birth mavericks would even have considered it, and by the '40s, many kinds of music offered such people far more enticing venues elsewhere. Orchestral classicism was, if not for dullards, then certainly for the unadventurous. And the unadventurous don't have ambitions to be professional crooks sometimes.

It's here, of course, that the revolutionary machine-dreams of modernism filtered. Classical expertise and technical mastery cannot be cut adrift from layers and layers of ordinary, unassuming music: usage, and not just because both can be pitilessly boring to outsiders. The mundane and the ultramundane are part of a continuum, not opposites.

Today the Thermen/Theremin story seems more romance than radicalism, it would make a fit subject for opera, even for Hollywood: an inventor of musical devices becomes an ambassador for Leninist future-art and is then named as a traitor-defector under Stalinism. He becomes a successful novelty-name on the American culture circuit but is driven — at the height of segregation — into semi-retirement from polite society when he marries a black dancer, Lavinia Williams. He is kidnapped and forced in secret by the KGB to develop surveillance equipment, on pain of death. During the '50s he's missing, presumed dead, his most devoted disciple and fellow-exile Clara Rockwell keeps the faith, until the day they are reunited.

However much of this is fact, however much is subtly exaggerated or rounded into melodrama, it's undoubtedly the tale of an honest man whipped ragged by the gale of life, and the forces of politics and history. And then, at the close of his life, he is proved right after all, validated not by the avant-garde but by pop culture. Which is a good story.

And yet his acclaim feels a bit too pat, a bit too late. Heard today, Clara Rockwell's theremin performances make no concessions to the heroic modernism that informed the instrument's origins, nor to Russolo, nor Varèse, nor even Jimmy Page. Her

The ondes martenot



repertoire is absolutely non-radical — Glazunov, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Tchaikovsky — and her playing style is a throwback to the Romantic era: these pieces drip with portamento and brittle art-deco warbling. Her hands are liverspotted, arthritic claws, but still she flicks and jabs and curls her fingers in the gesture, any, reserved, almost aristocratic gestures she invented more than a half century ago. There's a distant emotional pull to her sound, and how she gets it, that's nothing to do with revolution, but everything to do with utopia (which also applies to the instrument's take-up by some of the pop/rock groups listed above).

Nostalgia for an age yet to come? For past visions of the future perfect? Consider: cyberpunk, the dominant pop-so-fi mode, is prophetic not of gleaming antiseptic spaceway-ranging utopias, but rather of the shabby ordinary present, everywhere extended the modern city street, stretching from exclusive malls and palatial consumerdomes outwards to endless junkyards, landfills, desolation. The awareness that more and more resources are tied up in discarded and obsolete machinery is transmuted into a kind of glamour.

The thrilling future landscapes of modernity functioned better as an inspiration than they ever did as material fact: not least because, put into practice, they seemed suddenly thick with reactionary links and fearful borrowings from the world they were supposed to be replacing. Think again of the grumpy look — in all those badly reproduced and hard-to-find photos — of the spherophon, the pianorad, the trautonium. Think again of the loss of these instruments (and the bad judgement and confused aesthetics that led to that loss). One has to wonder if what makes these faded machines so attractive — as well as the once-was, never-is future of music they ought to have belonged in — is actually that they failed. Tonight, live, from the dustbin of history. □

“RCA manufactured theremins from 1929: 'Not a radio! Not a phonograph! Not like anything you have ever heard or seen!' went the advertising”

A somewhat different and substantially extended version of this article appears as a chapter in *The Electric Storm*, Mark Sinker's critical history of music and technology which will be published next year by Quartet. Clara Rockwell can be heard on *The Art Of The Theremin (Delos)*. Oskar Sala's *My Fascinating Instrument* is out now on *Rax* (through Pinnacle Import). Missions's Turangalla and Varèse's *Equation* have both been recorded several times and are still available on a number of CDs. Lyola Kovina, Theremin's grand-niece and the world's only professional exponent of the craft, plays Southampton Gulshan on 16 September, and The Science Museum in West London holds regular theremin demonstrations (See *Sounding Off* for details). There are a number of theremin-related internet sites, for a start, go to: <http://www.hetd.com/~Ensembletrc>



TERRY ADAMS feat. Marshall Allen, Roosevelt Field, Greg Cohen, John Sabatino, Bobby Prevorse
Terror New World CD: NW073-2



TOMASZ STANKOWICZ feat. Tomasz Stankowicz, Pizz Warran, Edward Viscio
Twist Power Bros CD: PBR3865-2



GHOST Acid-folk group - like early Heyd and Faint.
Ghost HF CD: FSD09



MAGNA Double Live CD set by "Atrake"
period band
Bobbie 1981 Acc CD: AKT V



MATS GUSTAFSSON feat. Jon O'Rourke, Gene Coleman, Michael Zerang
Parrot Fish Eye Oskarek CD: OOS3066



HOWARD RILEY TRIO feat. Mario Costanzo, Tony Marsh
Whirling On The Moon Future Music CD: FMR3054



GEORGES DELERUE Original Film Scores - La Pléiade, Histoires, Mon Amour, John & Joe etc.
Music Of Travelling CD: K1591



JOHN CAGE Pieces for electronics, piano and voice
The Number Pieces I Plote CD: PODE 44

Available at the **VIRGIN MEGASTORE**, 14-16 Oxford St, London and all serious specialists

For further information please contact:
Harmonia Mundi, 19/21 Nils-Ström, London N1 7LL
Tel: 0171 253 0643 Fax: 0171 253 3237



LEO RECORDS

Music for the inquiring mind
and the passionate heart

LEO LAB

**NEW
RELEASES
SEPT 1995**

Here is the first batch of Leo Lab releases. The response to our second batch was so extraordinary that we are totally confused. We don't know any more which is our main label and which is its experimental sister. Anyway, here we go, and it seems it is time for big bands on Leo Lab. We are bringing one big band from USA and one from England. The rest of the releases are Swiss, Russian/German, and Anglo-American.



**LEO LAB CD 013 Simon Fell
MUSIC FOR 100**

Simon Fell's major composition for ten improvisers plus one post finally makes it to disc. An exhilarating combination of free jazz, improv, serialism, and hard swing. This performance was superbly recorded live at the Soneto Club and includes Alan Wilkerson, Paul Heston and Mick Deck among the soloists. The texts were written and proclaimed by complex postmodern Ben Wheat. This is the first release of a large scale Fell composition since the acclaimed "Competition 2". "Another big important soloists were which deserves to be heard!" Includes 12-page booklet. Total time: 75:20



**LEO LAB CD 014 Mark Harvey & The
Aardvark Jazz Orchestra
PAINTINGS FOR JAZZ ORCHESTRA**

"Paintings For Jazz Orchestra" an extended composition after the paintings by American artist Stuart Davis, was composed by Mark Harvey and recorded live by the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra. One of America's greatest modernist painters. Stuart Davis was himself influenced and inspired by jazz. "Paintings For Jazz Orchestra" works to repay the favour. The music takes off from the dynamism inherent in these paintings and creates fresh aural experiences through collective, collective and conductor's improvisation based on devised pre-set structures. Rated by Mark Harvey. Total time: 69:18



**LEO LAB CD 015 Christy Doran / John
Wolf Brennan
HENCEFORWARD**

"Henceforward" was originally released by the German label Dore Records in 1988. A somewhat understated review, but because of the label's closure has been unavailable for many years. Although Christy Doran and John Wolf Brennan live permanently in Germany, they are Irish-born. Their music is influenced to a great extent by their Irish musical heritage. The booklet includes very poetic notes by the Irish writer Declan O'Donnell. An one reviewer noted "This one of the 4000 records of the running time should be played" 12 compositions. Total duration: 74:10



**LEO LAB CD 016 Vladimir Miliar / Vitas
Pilibavicius / Vladimir Tatarsky
FRONTIERS**

A live recording of a concert played by one Englishman and two Lithuanians on a mix of electronic and of instruments plus combine drums. This live-up might suggest some aggressive playing, yet the music is very subtle and melodic. Vladimir Miliar, Russian speaking, led the leader of Moscow Composers' Orchestra conducted three out of the total six and wrote very personal Irish notes. Vladimir Tatarsky is of Russian-Tatar name, and the combine player Vitas Pilibavicius is of late discovery of the year. His solo plays a very special instrument called mega. Total time: 53:04



**LEO LAB CD 017 SA ZNA
INTO OBERLAND**

When we released the first SA ZNA CD a year or so ago the question was: can electronic music be as sensible, as meaningful music as professional? The answer of the critics still slightly in favour of the positive answer. Now the Russian live-up has been augmented by some Swiss. The question this time is: can amateurs create more sensible and meaningful music than professionals? We know the answer of course, and we can give you a hint: six improvised pieces played on found and created sound instruments were recorded during a psychological experiment. Total time: 69:14

**DISTRIBUTED BY
THESE RECORDS, CADILLAC, IMPETUS.**

MAIL ORDER & PRICES
CD — £10.00 Two CDs — £18.00 Three CDs — £25.00 Four CDs — £32.00
Postage and packing £1.00.
Payments by cheques, postal orders, international money orders, Eurocheques to
LEO RECORDS, THE COTTAGE, 6 ASHFLEY HILL, LONDON SE19 2AA



strat

for making sense

Once viewed as the guru of Ambient music, **Brian Eno** is now hailed as a prophet of the digital revolution. In this extended interview, he talks to fellow musician Paul Schütze about the vagaries of the new technologies he's supposed to be championing

Viciously labelled over his career either as a dilettante, pseudo-intellectual meddler in other people's work, or as a visionary artist and superhuman facilitator, Brian Eno eludes capture by remaining steps ahead of the men with the labels. His position in the culture of music and art has constantly evolved to the point where he now occupies a rarefied and diffuse status which he can alter according to the needs of the moment. If he faces a problem, it may well be finding a medium which can articulate his numerous impulses in a satisfactory way.

For now, he seems to be spreading himself across a number of individual media, including audio/visual/tactile installations (the recent *Self Storage* project with Laurie Anderson) and even that most dubious of events, the rock star charity gala (*War Child*). As far as music is concerned, he has recently returned to producing new albums by such major league players as U2 and David Bowie, and has just finished work on *Spinner*, a collaboration with bass player Jah Wobble which updates the music Eno produced for the Derek Jarman film *Glitterbug* (all projects which he showed little interest in discussing, as it turned out).

The interview took place at Eno's West London studio in July. I arrived at 10am, but he had already been there for four hours and seemed to be working on several unrelated projects simultaneously. The room, like its occupant, was

saying, I wonder why? I mean, I wonder what cultural picture this is painting that attracts me? What's different about it from other things? So I'm always doing that kind of examination anyway.

I think that's also why I work as a producer actually, because I do that on behalf of other people [if] they're starting to do something new. I try to describe to them what I think it is they're doing. So it's like articulating something that might otherwise have been a little vague. But the thing I don't like is that I've come to be seen as a supporter of new technologies for their own sake. 'Oh, isn't the Internet wonderful?', 'Aren't CD-ROMs fantastic things?' And I really think a lot of these technologies have yet to prove themselves. They're very promising, and of course one can imagine all sorts of futures where they are central and terribly important. But to pretend that that has happened so far is a complete hype.

Nearly the whole CD-ROM thing has been such a typically disastrous new media adventure, with all sorts of absolutely inappropriate intellectual baggage and cultural left-overs being forced into this medium, which it doesn't suit at all. So you get the *History Of Pop* video, the *History Of The CD Recording*, all pushed into a medium that 1) is not a good video player, 2) is not a good music player, and 3) is a very uncomfortable form of reading. So immediately the thing fails, because it tries to do things that are much better done by more highly evolved

enigmas

neatly minimal and humming with emphatic potential 'stuff'. Two computers opposed one another across the space — these he later used to show me the numerous self-generating pictures he is working on. Notes, diagrams, paper cut-outs and CDs were strewn about. Prior to the interview, Eno proposed an excursion to the local record shop. He wanted to purchase the extended mix of Donna Summer's 'State Of Independence', which, he says, ranks as one of the high points of 20th century art. Eno spent most of the interview lying back on a couch with his eyes closed — at times I felt like his analyst.

PS. William Gibson has often gone on record, particularly recently, as being the unwelcome prophet of virtual reality. You seem in a sense to be in a slightly similar position, as something like the *Alvin Toffler* of futurist aesthetics. Is it something you want to spend a huge amount of time doing — predicting the future for people — or would you rather be making it?

BE Well, they actually amount to the same thing, in many ways. In making it, you start to imagine it as well. I have always asked questions about why I get fascinated by something that I'm doing, or that somebody else is doing, so there's two things going on. First, there's the fascination and the seduction of it, but the second thing is me

other media.

One of the biggest problems, I think, with computers [is] that all of the designed energy is going into multiplying the options inside this box. Now, fine, that's wonderful, we're very pleased, in one sense, but the important thing, as anyone who's played synthesizers knows, is not the number of options that you have, but the rapport you can have with the instrument. This is why people playing crappy 35 year old electric guitars consistently come up with more interesting results, musically, than synthesizer players do. Because what you are thrilled by is not a new sound as such, but a new type of rapport that you feel. This is why there's a place for good players [and] why they don't disappear when sequencers suddenly come on the scene, because we still appreciate hearing that rapport. We feel that this is a musical activity. And these things [computers] as instruments are so pathetic. They depend so much on a kind of nerd's eye view of what sort of thing would be fun to do.

One of the things I've formulated recently, as a little rule of thumb for myself, is to say, a computer program should always allow you to continue working in the physical world that that activity suggests anyway. So if you're working with a music program, you don't have to keep going back to typing and using your mouse. People think that's being kind of picky, and rather stupid, but I've always had this theory that the body is the large brain, it's not like, this bit of you doesn't matter and this bit does. The whole physical experience is what you make things with. Anyone who works with any tactile art form knows this. And with any tactile instrument. They know that a lot of your



intelligence about what you're doing is not happening here [the head], it's happening all over other parts of your body. It's how your body feels about this sort of thing. Well, unfortunately, computer interfaces are so crude they've completely ignored that possibility. So, I want drawing programs that automatically work with a pad or a pen or whatever — I have one in fact! — then I want music programs and I want synthesizers that give me that same kind of physical relationship, that physical musical relationship.

A lot of contemporary electronic music gives the impression of having been designed remotely, by a music software programme such as Cubase. On paper, the software offers you an unlimited number of options, but the interface steers you in a series of very rigid and dull directions.

Those programs always force you into other areas of the brain, which might not necessarily be the ones you want to be in. Some people make good use of that, of course, and some musics that come out of that are successful. But other musics that try to use the bit of the brain that it likes to use are frustrated.

When I make loops on a sequencer, I always try to play them all the way through, so I play the whole part, then I listen to it, and quite often I find a long section that I like. Loop that, cut it up so that the loop doesn't recur regularly. The idea of always editing in straight vertical cuts is the most single annoying thing about most of that music. Because a whole part of my feeling has been to make music that is 'unlocked'. And all that stuff like *Thursday Afternoon*, *Discrete Music* and so on, is very deliberately that music where the elements float separately from one another.

One of the things I love about soul music is that it's relatively unlocked, so there are things that are very tight, like the rhythm section, but it's not tied tight, but not tied. People can shift around, and they create inflexions by not falling together when you expect them to and so on. So this unlocked thing has been a big issue for me for a long time. And then suddenly this kind of music appears that is not only locked, but absolutely fucking bolted down together.

[Another aspect of that] music — *Thursday Afternoon*, things like that — is trying to capitalise on something that Cage opened up, which is to say: the act of listening is in fact an act of composing. Now, his extreme version of this was silence, where there is only an act of listening, there is no act of composing on his part, there's only an act of creative listening on your part, if you're lucky.

So it's pure interaction, in a sense.

Without crap CD-ROMs in between, yeah. Interactivity's a very interesting word, because it implies that this is something we didn't do in art before, which is complete nonsense, because the only interesting art experiences are the ones that engage you in that way, in which you are invited to become part of the authorship of something in some way or another. And usually in some more meaningful way than [adopts dorky voice] choosing whether to open this door or that door.

The great benefit [of tools like Cubase] is that they remove the issue of skill, and replace it with the issue of judgment. With Cubase or [an imaging program like] Photoshop, anybody can actually do anything, and you can make stuff that sounds very much like stuff you'd hear on the radio, or looks very much like anything you'd see in magazines. So the question becomes not whether you can do it or not, because any drudge can do it if they're prepared to sit in front of the computer for a few days, the question then is: of all the things you can now do, which do you choose to do? This is a whole issue for which there are not manuals! And nobody has actually discussed that side of it — they're all so thrilled by the thought that I can do anything! The real interesting question of 'So what do I do?' isn't being addressed. This is why I say I'd rather talk about abstract things because that's the kind of question that I want to talk about. We're now in a sea of unmoored judgments. Of people thinking that the judgment part is the bonus, the bit you put on at the end, once you've got a good beat. ... I think that's got to be right at the beginning of the process, it's got to steer you all the way through.

That could be an aspect of the software: that you are actually called upon to make a judgment. I think that is a problem with a lot of software, that it presupposes that a judgment is contained within it. You don't need to actually make it.

Well, I think it comes back to this option thing again. The glamour in software design is to multiply options. That's considered the clever thing to do. And this is such a

pathetic form of hubris, you know it's like, the glamour in being a piano player is to play more notes. Any artist knows this is a fairly redundant idea.

[But] there's an interesting other side to the story as well, which is that there continues to be an active market, in fact a growing market, in retro equipment. One of the things that fuels that is the understanding that certain things do particular jobs extremely well. They don't do any other job, but you're happy to have them to do that one job. And more and more people are getting the sense that it's worth collecting your equipment on that basis, not to have all the options but a few that really work.

I was working with Howe B a couple of weeks ago, in Dublin, and he has an old Echoplex, which is essential to what he does. Because you know, the old Echoplex, you move the thing so the echo goes 'weeee, weeee, whup whup', that's a big part of everything he does. Now, Howe B, if he wanted, could have all sorts of digital processing boxes, but he wants that. He's focused on it and he's used to it with such good taste and skill. He's like the guy with the Stratocaster who really understands what you can do with this thing, even though it's only this thing.

People seem less inclined to explore a piece of equipment and hang onto it. They prefer to use the factory presets and then sell it before it loses its value and buy the next thing. I remember you talking about this with regard to the DK7.

They're all back there, I can show you them later!

I read an interview once where you were talking about the value of music not necessarily being connected to its complexity or its sophistication, but being very much contained within the experience of the listener. I think you used the example of some Thai music, which was obviously enrapturing the audience but didn't do anything for you. With the current explosion of experimental creative music, I wonder, if we completely set ourselves adrift in a free-for-all of experimentation, is the actual meaning of that work going to start to fall apart, because it has no cultural, historical or contextual references, does it become meaningless?

Well, I think the meaning of a lot of work does fall apart in time. One of the assumptions of art for a long time has been that things have value, and that it persists. Because it's somehow some quality intrinsic to things that is eternal. Well, I've come to think that that isn't the case. The value of a piece of work is the result of the quality of the interaction. You're part of the value of the thing. It doesn't have value: value is something that you confer, that you make happen. Just like the Ching doesn't have meaning in some abstract sense of having meaning invested in it, but your interaction with the thing generates meaning. That's a different thing from saying it has meaning.

Now, what I think can therefore happen, if you say that meaning and value — they're rather similar terms in the way I'm using them — are generated by a process, then you can also say, that process can stop. For instance, Duchamp's unal, the famous piece, I'm sure was a very important work of art in 1914, and it is now not: this is my opinion. It has only a historical position in the chain of how things came into being. It doesn't live now. In the same way as some distant ancestral species undoubtedly was part of the story of how we got here, but it isn't alive now. Neanderthal Man is gone. That doesn't mean we don't play any part, but it does mean we say it is not a present reality for us. And I think one of the great confusions of art criticism and art thinking in general is the inability to see that. This is why popular art has always been so demeaned by 'proper' art critics because it clearly is ephemeral. In fact, it turns out that some of it isn't. But it presents itself as ephemeral. It doesn't present itself as eternal. And so, since it was always seen as a condition that art had to have eternal qualities, it therefore disqualifies itself straight off.

In your interest in visual arts and installations, you seem to be drifting in a more 'high art' direction, moving towards a more 'rarefied' area of working than previously. That's true in a way, but I think there's an equally inexorable movement in people's tastes in what they want to see. For instance, 15 years ago Ambient music was a completely obscure and oblique idea. I remember taking you into record companies, and them saying, 'Nobody wants to listen to music that doesn't have a beat, doesn't

have a melody, doesn't have a singer, doesn't have words.' All they could see were all the things it didn't have. Well, it turns out they were wrong: people's tastes have very much drifted in that direction, and people are very able to handle long pieces of music with or without structures and key-chord changes... So what you say is true, that I am drifting that way, but I think everybody is. And I don't doubt that on the horizon is some new mélange art form which mixes things that come from pop video, from art video, from installation work, from performance art, from rock 'n' roll performance, from all those things. You can see it starting to happen: even in U2's Zoo TV tour you can see the beginnings of something that quite self-consciously was grabbing those kind of ideas and putting them together and saying, 'We can do it. We can get away with it, and people will like it!' That was the other triumph: they did.

How do you analyse your own work?

I think I can talk about a lot of it, but probably not the bits I'm working on at the moment: those are the bits that by definition are still untalkable about. Things become talkable about only in retrospect.

Let's take some of the older music like *Another Green World*, *Tiger Mountain*.

I don't think I'm inventing it retrospectively, but I think there were quite a few issues in there that are interesting to me. A very important one was the idea of removing the narrator as the centre of the music. I tried to do that in quite a few different ways: for instance on *Another Green World* there are 14 pieces of music, of which only five actually have a voice. Most people don't realise that that's the proportion — that was quite a bit of sleight of hand. People tend to think of that as a song record. But it isn't: it's an instrumental record with the odd bit of vocal.

The songs are very conspicuously placed, though you were still remembering the vocal several tracks after it had finished.

I was very interested at that time to see if there was a way of making music that still connected with one emotionally — of course it's easy to make music that doesn't connect emotionally, to fulfil any brief you want — but I wanted to make music that still had an emotional connection that didn't depend on a narrative or on a person. And a lot of the stuff I was doing, I think, was to do with the erosion of a single personality being at the centre of the music. I did that in lots of different ways, by sinking the voice in, or by singing nonsense, or, like on *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, not using my own voice, but assembling other voices. All these were ways of giving the message 'that isn't the important bit, necessarily'. That's only one part of the landscape. It's difficult to do that, because if there's a voice there, you know that that's the part of the landscape people want to focus on, because we have such a history of it. It's particularly true of critics, who will almost inevitably, if there are words, treat them as the content of the song. That's presumably because it's difficult to write well about music.

Yes, there's something to learn to do I can write my music, why can't they? But I can write about music, and I'm not a critic. It's not even my job to write about music; I can. I can write about the meaning of certain drum sounds, the difference in meaning between Jimi Hendrix's way of playing a guitar and Jeff Beck's way. And I think I can write about those things to achieve exactly the same results as they hope and fail to achieve by writing about the words. This isn't always true: there are some kinds of music which do have their lyrics as the centre, like Laurie Anderson, for instance. She's very clear that she's a storyteller. For those cases that deserve that kind of scrutiny, write about it. But don't go and do the same thing on a Funkadelic record if really isn't about that.

On *Another Green World* there's one track which appears to have the very distant voices of children.

Yeah! It's a playground. I'd forgotten all about that.

It's very evocative, but also it performs the function of moving your perspective on the idea of a human presence. There's this horizon line, on which is placed distant and very poignant human sound. And that acts to focus the presence of the voice.

Yeah, I agree. This is a case of TS Eliot, where he said that the poem the reader reads may be better than that which the writer wrote! That's part of the game, to try to make things that can become better than what you thought you were doing. The

flooded of what I was saying earlier about recognising that art can lose its value, is recognising also that it can multiply its value enormously, far beyond anything you ever did. It becomes autonomous, and can start to take on meanings and interpretations that really were not your own. Now, I was quite consciously at that time working with different ways to treat voices. That project was conscious, but the particular moves were more like, 'That sounds pretty good. I'll just leave that there.' But in that sense it really becomes interactive.

Yeah, and in fact oracles are a very good model. I used to have this big thing on this wall, about the relationship between the way we use oracles and the way we use culture in general. I think culture is an oracular system in a way, it's a way in which we can map things that are quite vague and muddled up in here, out on an external matrix of some kind. This is exactly what happens with the I Ching: you pull an I Ching thing, and it says something to you, and you say, 'What does that line mean?' What you're really saying is, 'Which part of me can I describe in that way?' And as soon as you do that, the bits of you start to separate out, and you can start to look at the dynamics of them. I have always thought that this is what I wanted artworks to do. I don't want to make things that are transmitters, I don't have anything to say in that sense of, 'Here's my message, and I'll shout it down this long tube called the artwork, and you'll get it at the end if you're clever enough.' What I want to do is to make things that you can open and make use of, which become a place where you can create meaning.

On *Spinner*, the combination of the transparency of your work and the almost geological opacity of Wobble's work [Bino laughs] is an interesting one.

It is — it's very weird, I think. It's a very strange record for me, because I made a decision with this record. I've been thinking a lot about the kinds of artists who don't censor their own work. Now, I can think of three conspicuous ones: Picasso is one, Miles Davis is another, Prince is another. They're all people who just put it out, and I think they have almost no critical self-censorship. They say, 'Let the market

decide, let the world decide.'

It comes from an absolute faith in their own work.

I think so, but it also comes from a recognition that you might not be the best person to judge it. That's a kind of humility, actually. It's a mixture of arrogance, which says, 'I know I'm fucking good.' But a humility, which says, 'I'm not the person to decide.' I thought, perhaps this time I would try to do that, and see what happens. And I thought, as I said in the liner notes, I put myself into the hands of Jahf. Because I'd like to see what that feels like. Not to fuss about, just to see what happens.

Did you co-produce it?

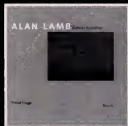
No, I did the original music for *Gitterbug* [Wobble] got the stereo tapes from me of that; he couldn't take them apart in any way, because a lot of them never were anything other than stereo stuff that I did here. So he got those pieces, 19 altogether, and just worked on top of them — or didn't. On some of them he had the admirable restraint to leave them alone. And other ones he made a big thing out of. So the thing was really completely in two stages: me, then him. So all the drumming and the bass he did separately?

Yes, I didn't even hear it all till it was finished. I had no input at all on that stage of it. Everything that he put on, he produced. Anything you hear looming around in the back is probably what I produced. □

Spinner will be released later this month on All Saints (through Virgin). Paul Schütze's new album, *Vertical Memory by Seed*, is out now on Beyond (through Pinnacle).



棒泥 DOROB



ALAN LAMB: PRIMAL IMAGE
dark ambience culled by a neuro-surgeon
who contact mikes telegraph wires in the
australian desert; textures range from
subtle and sublime to violent walls of sound
(CD: Dorobo 008)



**SHINJUKU THIEF
THE WITCH HUNTER**
latest release from this acclaimed outfit
meshing dark ambient, gothic orchestral
and gypsy influences
(CD: Dorobo 009)



**BLACK LUNG
SILENT WEAPONS FOR QUIET WARS**
disturbing soundtrack to a series of
conspiracy theories incorporating
counterculture soundbites
(CD: Dorobo 005)

DOCUMENT 01 - TRANCE TRIBAL music influenced by traditions and technology w. **PAUL SCHÜTZ DNA LOUNGE LOGGERS** AD **SOMA TCH ZEN PARADOX**
SUMTOY SHINJUKU FILTH GARRY HAVRILLAY SYNAPSE INTERRUPT HANGING GARDEN MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY DEPT OF ZOOLOGY (CD: Dorobo 001)
TCH: AGUTLOU eg mixes elements of trance and ambient soundscapes (CD-ep: Dorobo 004)

SHINJUKU THIEF *aka zvonik*
THE SCREBLER a bleak reworking of the film including portions of Kurosawa's original text and backdrops of industrial noise (CD: Dorobo 006)
THE WITCH HUNTER inspired by 15m century European witch hunts containing dark textures and brooding ambience with occasional outbursts of violence and power (CD: Dorobo 003)
SUCCULENT BLUE SWAY soundtrack (aka) to the film project mixing ambient techno and aggressive percussion (CD: Dorobo 006)

for a full catalogue of these and other independent releases send an 89p/A4 SAE or 4xIRC to
IMPETUS DISTRIBUTION, PO Box 1324, London W5 2ZU, tel/fax: 0181-998 6411



CUBA and the NIGHT *a first novel by Pico Iyer*

The setting is Cuba now, a place of yearnings, a strange place. Its economy wrecked, its revolution gone sour, its isolation almost complete, it lives largely on hopes and dreams - of sex, of money, of escape to America, Europe, anywhere. In this atmosphere of intense eroticism and frustration a love story develops, one as odd, abandoned, and ambiguous as Cuba itself.

'Pico Iyer is among the finest travel writers of his generation, and his experience, his worldliness, endow the pages of this book with the reek of authenticity: the novel is dense and pungent with perfect detail. This same worldliness provides the undercurrent of cool reality about people's lives, their impossible dreams and inevitable disappointments, that makes Cuba and the Night the most promising and beguiling of fiction debuts.'

William Boyd

 A Quartet Book £9.00

In 70s New York, **Suicide**'s Martin Rev and Alan Vega were outsiders, electro-minimalists forging a nihilistic alliance of primal electronics and urban Americana. Story by Edwin Pouncey

neon city dreaming

Suicide were primal Americana, pure electricity: neon-lit minimalists lurking at the outer edges of the New York art rock nexus. They were Electro pop before the fact, although not Electro pop as sleek, Palladian monon, à la Kraftwerk. They used the distorting buzz and hum of early electronics to co-opt the ecstatic throb of rockabilly and the low moan of country blues into urban narratives that were tragic at best, and usually mind-numbingly nihilistic.

Some of what you needed to know about Suicide was encoded in a photograph that appeared on the back of their 1977 debut album. It's a bleached out, strobe-lit image: Vocalist Alan Vega stands in the shadows, looking bad attitude. The pose he strikes is part rock 'n' roll slouch, part New York street tough. Instrumentalist Martin Rev is off to one side, his face obscured by an enormous pair of alien ski goggles. Despite his topsh white jacket and cigarette, Rev looks more android-like than human.

When Suicide plugged in the reaction they elicited from audiences was aggressive and antagonistic. There was something lonely, primal and lost in the duo's music (coupled with a name that hinted at self-destruction), and few at the time were willing to embrace such a bleak vision. They were booed in New York and bottled off stage in Brussels and London (the official live bootleg *23 Minutes in Brussels* documents one such not torn performance).

"When we went out and toured we expected that reaction," sighs Martin Rev now. "Many people hadn't heard of us. They probably felt confronted because we took them by surprise. People would say, 'Where are the drums? Where are the guitars?' There was something internal in the intensity of our songs, our image and our music. It wasn't a conscious thing for me, it was moving me and I felt this was really the stand I wanted to take against the world. [But] to get that music through was almost like stepping into a boxing ring getting ready to fight. At our first gig people would be keeping up on stage, and I'd be playing with one hand and trying to protect myself with the other."

The origins of Suicide lie in the New York loft scene of the late 60s/early 70s, a brief utopian space where beat poets and free jazz musicians mingled with political action groups and Abstract Expressionist painters and sculptors. Rev's contribution to this creative ferment was to form a free jazz/rock group called Reverend B.

"I was using electric keyboards and I had a lot of guys playing sax, a couple of drummers, some trumpet players. It developed into a cool kind of rock thing between the rhythm section and the



Martin Rev (left) and Alan Vega

organ with a lot of improvisation. I was playing in alternative spaces where there were political anti-war [ie Vietnam] things happening, that's where I met Alan. He was involved as a visual artist in a space that was a large co-operative art gallery. Alan was one of the more radical members of the group. He had a key and access to [the gallery] late at night, oft hours. He was always there so I could fall in whenever I wanted to.

"Alan was already fooling around with feedback tapes from old pieces of equipment and I would come in and try to put a percussion thing around it. At first we'd use what we had around. I had a pair of drumsticks and would hammer beats out on the floor. That developed into the idea for the group, and we played our first gigs in that space. I think the first flyer we did said 'Punk Music by Suicide', and that was several years before punk happened.

"I started with a set of drums, then I brought in a keyboard which I'd play with one hand while I was hitting a snare drum with the other. Alan was playing a trumpet, and we had a guitarist who was also a visual artist. His name was Cool T. He used to play this very free sounding improvised electric guitar. We all had different names, mine was Marty Maniac, Alan was Nasty Cut. When Cool T left, we were Marty and Alan. Suicide for a long time, pretty much until the first album came out."

Suicide was released in 1977 on the New York label Red Star, which was owned by the group's future manager Marty Thau. It was an astonishing record, an intense mix of rock 'n' roll mythology harnessed to primitive electronics ("Rocket USA", "Ghost Rider") and heart-breaking, halcyon ballads like "Dream Baby Dream" ("We always felt that was an anthem of sorts," says Rev). One song in particular seemed to encapsulate the sense of existential terror that lurked below the surface of *Suicide*'s music: "Frankie Teardrop" was an urban psychodrama, the 'true' story of poverty-stricken Frankie who murders his family, commits suicide and ends up in hell. Vega's ear-splitting shriek is the high point of the song, but other, unsettling sounds filter through: the faint bridle of shopping mall music which Rev picked up on a tiny transistor radio and then fed into the climax of the track.

"I was using radios, picking stuff at random and mixing it in," he explains. "I was looking for those kind of things to use but it wasn't planned. We used to get radio stations feeding through the amps when we were playing songs."

"Alan got the story for 'Frankie' out of a newspaper. He had another lyric which put him in outer space, but he went back and rewrote it. To us, it was just another 'out' that sounded right."

The duo's second album was released in 1980 on Ze, the same year as Vega's first solo release. Produced by The Cars' Ric Ocasek, it was a much more streamlined record, attempting to emulate the success of "Dream Baby Dream", their near hit single. It failed to sell and the duo split to pursue solo projects (although they would occasionally record and perform together again in the future). Vega produced a string of solo records and is now a celebrated sculptor: his principal medium is neon. Rev had already released a (self-titled) solo album in the late 70s on Charles Ball's Infidelity (aka Lust/Unlust) label, which also issued records by such No Wave pioneers as Mars and Teenage Jesus And The Jerks. His most recent album, *Cheyenne*, is a medley of new material and the instrumental tracks from the second *Suicide* album. A new record is due later this year.

Throughout a long, involved career, Martin Rev's music has never strayed far from his roots in 60s free jazz, 70s punk and electronic experimentation.

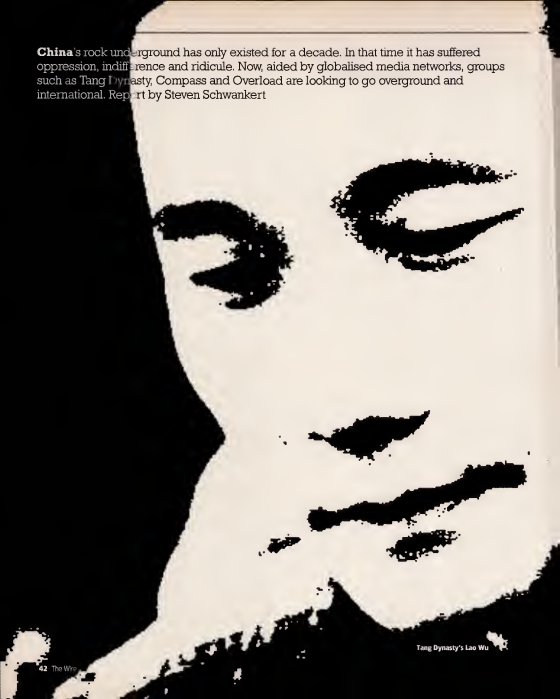
"Rock came first for me, because that's the music I grew up with, doo wop, urban blues. But I moved into jazz because it was more of a challenge to play that music. As a teenager I was fortunate enough to catch great people like Monk, Miles and Ornette playing live. I used to get in under age at The Five Spot to watch Monk play, those players are really my contemporaries. Then I started to combine the electronics with the free jazz thing. With Reverend B, the most electronic instrument at the time was an electric keyboard, synthesizers were rare and had yet to be developed. The first stuff I used in *Suicide* didn't include a synthesizer, even into the first record I had an electric keyboard with boxes and electro-harmonic things plugged in. It was like building your own synthesizer which had a more personal and crude sound. I've always grown and changed depending on what is available at the time. I guess I've never found a kind of music were I can say, 'This is it'." □

Martin Rev performs two solo shows in the UK this month. See *Sounding Off* for details.



Martin Rev

China's rock underground has only existed for a decade. In that time it has suffered oppression, indifference and ridicule. Now, aided by globalised media networks, groups such as Tang Dynasty, Compass and Overload are looking to go overground and international. Report by Steven Schwankert



Tang Dynasty's Lao Wu



rock

in opposition

On a blustery Saturday afternoon last October, the American-owned Beijing Amusement Park is filled with families enjoying a day off. Small boys in People's Liberation Army uniforms run around with their parents and grandparents in tow. At the park's performance stage, the afternoon's entertainment starts with a raft of footballs and sweets. The show continues with performances by a Michael Jackson impersonator and a group playing cover versions of "Sweet USA" and "Live And Let Die."

Among the crowd of Mao-jacketed children and senior citizens, a handful of youths sporting black leather and mohawks stick out. They've come to see the day's headlining event: mainstream rockers The Compass (Zhi Nan Zhen) and thrash metal group Overload (Chao Zai), two of Beijing's most established rock groups. Gao Qi, Overload's lead singer, seems pretty psyched up for the gig. "We've never played without a fight. It's kind of exciting," he beams.

The Compass are on first, complete with their new vocalist Rong Rong, who joined the group only one month earlier. Prior to his arrival, The Compass were probably more famous for Rong Rong's predecessor, lead singer Luo Qi, and the titular story surrounding her, than for their music. Luo lost her left eye when she was hit with a beer bottle during an underground rock party. After that, she sported sunglasses to cover her injury. At the Amusement Park, The Compass' mainstream rock is well received by the day-tripping crowd of about 100.

"You know how we do this, don't you?" asks Beijing Amusement Park General Manager Bob Lamb. "We just go ahead and do it. The park puts on a popular music show every day," he says, "though the proper channels, this would never happen." During The Compass' set, he adds, "What's wrong with this music? It's just good music."

Later, the normally laid-back Gao Qi transforms himself into a screaming maniac when he and Overload take the stage. "Are you ready?" he asks the small but enthusiastic crowd, which has been in the act of gathering near the stage. The group plays like it's on fire—literally. Flaming ribbons, the first song, an amplifier ignites and burns until technicians beat it out. Guitars and drums cut out at various points as wires

come loose, but the show goes on. At the end of the set, a middle-aged man standing in front of the stage joins Overload's fans in a chorus of "one more!" Such are the stretch marks of rock's growth in the People's Republic Of China.

It would be easy, but misleading, to dismiss Beijing's rock scene as a copy of Euro-American music. Rock in China is innovation, not imitation. Developing in a nation isolated historically from the West, China's rock musicians are adopting a foreign concept and adapting it to their own situation. Beijing's rockers reach deep into China's rich musical and cultural history for symbols and material. "We chose the name Tang Dynasty [Tang Chao] because that was China's greatest period. It was also the greatest era for the arts," says drummer Zhao Nan. "We use [Chinese] symbols because they're universal," adds the group's bassist Zhang Ju.

Rock isn't really anything new in China. "I bought the first electric guitar in Beijing [in 1980]," says Guo Chuanlin, Chinese rock's unofficial historian and manager/founding member of the Metal group Black Panther (Hei Bao). The guitar cost him 80 yuan, two weeks' salary for a government worker at the time. Guo continues the version of the early days: "In 1982 a Filipino surf band did a show at a park. It was all combs, Beach Boys and stuff. We stood there stunned. We had no idea a guitar could make those sounds! That was a turning point."

In 1985, Cui Jian, a former trumpeter with The Beijing Polyharmonic Orchestra, drew on the influence of Simon And Garfunkel, as well as his classical music training and his experiences during the Cultural Revolution, and began writing his own songs. "Cui Jian developed differently from the rest of us. He started writing his own stuff much earlier," Guo explains. At first few Chinese identified with or enjoyed Cui's provocative lyrics and sandpaper vocals. However, during a 1987 televised concert

Cui performed his song "I Have Nothing" ("Yi Wu Suo You") and touched a nerve among a growing number of disillusioned Chinese youths. The song became an enormous hit, and the phrase "yi wu suo you" literally "one without everything" is now part of the vocabulary many Chinese youths use to describe their present situation and future prospects.

Around the same time, other groups started to emerge. Cobra (Yan Jing Shi), an all-female group, Black Panther, Guo's group, The Breathing (Hu Xi), Gao Qi's original group, and Mayday, a seminal group that featured the punk-influenced guitarist He Yong. It was also in 1987 that Chinese musicians began using the phrase "yao gun", as rock 'n' roll is translated "Bulldoze that, who really knew what rock was!" says Guo.

Then came 1989 and the devastating events at Tiananmen Square. Though Cui Jian and other groups performed in the Square, most avoided direct participation in the dissident student movement, fearing that their music would be labelled political or even counter-revolutionary. "I went to the Square every day," says Gao Qi, who had dropped out of college where he was studying to be a tourist guide. "When 4 June [the night of the government crackdown] happened we were absolutely shocked. But, our parents really weren't that surprised. They'd seen this kind of thing happen before."

After the crackdown, China's youth took a new direction. Previously they had talked about "women guoyi" (our country). After 4 June, they spoke of "women zi" (ourselves). Gao Qi explains: "Pre-89 we were idealistic. Post-89 we are realistic. Since 1989, a lot has changed. I've changed, my music has changed. Some people are still writing songs about the government, but I don't see the point. Now I write about how we can live, what our purpose is."

In the late 80s, rock in China was an unknown quantity both politically and financially. Rock's popularity, and therefore its marketability, was mostly limited to Beijing's student and artistic communities. Because it spoke of individuality and personal depression, and made veiled references to the government, the state-run recording studios would not produce rock albums. However, in the early 90s, many state-run publishing houses lost their government subsidies and were forced to turn a profit. As rock's popularity increased both within and outside of Beijing, and the post-Tiananmen dust settled, studios and publishers in major cities began producing albums by groups like The Compass and the now-defunct The Breathing.

At the same time, foreign music producers began to take an interest in Chinese rock. EMI signed Cui Jian, and a Taiwan record company, Rock Records, began looking for Beijing musicians to sign. "We started looking at the situation [in mainland China], to understand it," says Rock Records producer Cha Min-Shu. "In the US there are so many choices. Here there's only Taiwan and Cantonese pop. However, we felt that mainland [Chinese] would want to listen to music made by mainlanders. When we came [to Beijing] we looked for composers/artists that we could assist in producing." Rock Records' new mainland China division, Magic Stone Culture, signed Black Panther and Tan's Dynasty. Since then Magic Stone has added former Black Panther vocalist Dou Wei, He Yong and folk rock artist Zhang Chu to its roster, and backed

them with production assistance and money for equipment and video production.

In the late 80s and early 90s, groups longed for the chance to make an album. Now the established groups have their own records out or have contributed tracks to compilation albums. Videos for Tang Dynasty and Dou Wei can be seen on Hong Kong's Channel V, part of Rupert Murdoch's Star TV system. Last year, Cui Jian, Tang Dynasty, Cobra and singer Wang Yong toured Germany under the banner "The Chinese Avant Garde". More recently, this August Cui Jian toured America, playing shows in San Francisco, New York and Boston. In addition, in the last 12 months He Yong has travelled to London to perform, Cui Jian and Tang Dynasty went to Japan for concerts in Tokyo and Fukuoka respectively, and Dou Wei, Zhang Chu, He Yong and Tang Dynasty did a combined show in Hong Kong in December. In Europe, Cobra released their first CD, *Hypocrisy* (it is not available in China yet). Now that they have achieved a measure of international acclaim, China's rock musicians want a broad domestic audience and a decent living.



PHOTO: STEVEN SCHWARTZ

"If the people want Hong Kong pop shit, that's fine, but that's not what we're about"

"Do you know where most Chinese get their music?" asks Cobra drummer Wang Xiaofang. Sitting on the floor of her small apartment in southwest Beijing, she taps her thumbnail with disgust against the TV's glass screen. "Television," she spits. Pop music videos and performances are broadcast regularly on Chinese television. Owners of illegal satellite dishes can tune into Channel V. At night Channel V switches primarily to Mandarin language broadcasting. Via the network, Tang Dynasty has become the most popular group in Taiwan, a market it might not otherwise have reached. Dou Wei's video for "Believe" reached the top three in the station's video countdown, and coupled with his relationship with Hong Kong pop star Wang Jingwen, has helped him make in-roads into the otherwise impenetrable Hong Kong market. Although this is a breakthrough for China's rockers, Channel V is still dominated by

and/or mainstream pop.

China's radio stations have also proliferated. Notable among the new shows is dissident disc jockey Zhang Youda's flamboyant *New Music Magazine*. A graduate of the same drama school that produced Chinese film star Gong Li, Zhang's ponytail earned him the label "dangerous" at Beijing's Number One radio station. After two years, his original (American) sponsors pulled out and the show ended abruptly. However, Zhang's popularity brought in a flood of letters demanding that the show return. In 1993, he started two new programmes which are still being broadcast: *New Music Magazine*, a rock programme featuring both Chinese and foreign groups, and *Midnight Blues*. Zhang's shows are now syndicated in the cities of Changchun and Qiqihar, and he is generally believed to be the most popular DJ in China.

Chinese rock has suffered from government indifference. Cui Jian's success began with his 1987 television appearance, an opportunity that neither Cao nor other performers have had in recent years. His popularity then grew when the government banned him from performing live and held up the release of his records. In the beginning, when rock had a much smaller following, the government actively opposed it, which invested the music with outlaw status. At times the government has allowed big concerts when they needed to promote an event, such as the 1990 Asian Games or its recent bid to host the 2000 Olympics. With those exceptions, stadium concerts are almost unheard of in Beijing, though other cities allow them.

As rock's popularity has grown, the government has changed tactics: rather than support or denounce the music, they ignore it, denying it any bona fide or de facto endorsement. Instead, state-run media advocates and promotes *long shi*, a kind of popular music that originated in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Asian pop music industry



WIRE

as a whole is based on love songs sung by handsome men and beautiful women. "Once a singer and a record company agree to co-operate, the company handles everything," explains Wu Yue, one of Central Chinese Television's top music video directors. "They choose the singer's image, write the songs, shell out the money for production, make the videos, market the record. All the singer does is sing and live up to their image."

Popular music also translates well into karaoke, one of Asia's favourite pastimes. China's rock musicians despise pop's simplicity and those singers who write none of their own lyrics or music. "If the people want Hong Kong pop shit, that's fine, but that's not what we're about," says Gao Qi.

As in other parts of the world, rock appeals to China's youth, disillusioned and frustrated by changing social conditions, low job prospects and a generation gap unparalleled in the West. However, acceptance, especially among university students, rock's largest audience, is not universal. "They're just aping foreigners," a college student from Hunan Province told me. One of her classmates added, "Why the long hair? What's the point? It's ugly." A Beijing Foreign Language Institute graduate said, "I think the long hair, the leather, it's just some kind of identity crisis." Zhang Ju, whose hair spills to mid-back, acknowledges the awkward position of the extensively-mimed. "When people first started coming to our shows, it wasn't to listen, it was to look. They wanted to see what we're all about. Chinese

journalists came around to interview us, having never listened to our music. Their first question was always, 'Why do you have long hair?' Their second was always, 'What do your parents think?'"

Concert organizer and manager Lu-Fei Han Qiang suggests that the audience for rock in China has changed dramatically since 1989. "In the late 80s, if you held a rock party, everybody was there to see the band, they were serious about the music. Now, it's a social thing. They people want to talk with their friends, have a few drinks, dance, listen to whoever's performing. Money's too important now. They don't listen to the message."

The groups are more hopeful. "I think the influence of rock is great, especially among college students," says The Compass's Zhou Di. "Young people) are not satisfied, and they're looking for something to [fill the gap] in their lives. We need that kind of audience," adds lead singer Rong Rong.

"We're so poor," sighs Wang Xiaofang. He Yang tells me that in the past there were times when he didn't have enough to eat. Musicians like Wang and He live outside the system of the state-run "dan wei", or work unit, which allows them greater freedom, but offers none of the system's benefits, like housing and a guaranteed salary. In the beginning, most rock musicians lived at home, practised anywhere they could find and spent whatever money they had on instruments and any tapes that were available. When the members of The Compass rolled into Beijing from Sichuan Province three years ago, they had few friends and nowhere to go. "They had no place to stay, they had no place to practise and ran out of money after ten days. They crashed in my office for two weeks until I found them a place to live," recalls the group's former manager Wang Xiong (Wang, who has since had a bitter split with the group, has also managed Cui Jian and produced a compilation album, *Rock 'N' Roll Beijing*, that included tracks by The Compass, Cobra, Dou Wei's second group The Dreaming, Gao Qi's Overload and The Breathing).

Despite increased notoriety, China's rock stars do not enjoy the lifestyles of their Western counterparts. Zhang Ju summed it up best: "We're famous, but we're poor." He's not kidding. His fellow group members Lao Wu and Zhao Nian arrive for rehearsal on bicycles. Dou Wei and He Yong live in apartments owned by their parents. Wang Xiaofang admits that if it weren't for her ex-husband, former Cui Jian group member

Wang Di, she wouldn't have her own apartment. Cobra won't be recording another album until the group repays what it owes on the first one, Wang explained. The members of Black Panther say that one of their biggest problems is debt.

And then there's Cui Jian. In Beijing it's hp to call him 'Lao Cui', or Old Cui, a term usually reserved for people over 50. Cui isn't exactly personable at 33, but as far as rock in China goes, he's the oldest and by far the most popular musician. He released his first album, *Rock 'N' Roll For The New Long March*, in 1990 at the height of the post-Tiananmen air of fear, and followed it a year later with *Solution*. When the Chinese government needed money for the 1990 Asia Games they allowed Cui to go out on tour, something that has not yet been repeated. However, just because he had government backing didn't mean Cui intended to behave. Each time he performed "A Piece Of Red Cloth" from *Solution*, he produced a strip of red fabric and blindfolded himself. The message wasn't lost on anyone, including the government. Halfway through the tour, the remaining performances were cancelled

and Cui was banned from doing large concerts. Only this year has he resumed stadium shows.

Though he's a long way from retirement, Cui's new album, *Eggs Under The Red Flag*, is more introspective than *Rock 'N' Roll For The New Long March* and *Solution*. Those albums were about large issues facing China's youth and the nation. *Eggs* still has a political edge, but now the questions are leveled at a more

individual agenda, such as, "My body is here/Where are my ideals?" ("Casket"). "My music has become more personal. I've become more realistic," he explains. Because of 1989 and Chinese youth's subsequent shift in direction, Cui's audience has changed considerably. Once a singular voice for almost an entire generation, Cui now adopts something of an ambivalent position in relation to his fanbase. "The difference between the 80s and the 90s is in the ideals. In the 80s they [Chinese youth] wanted to be heroes. Now they probably worry most about their salaries."

Still, for many Chinese, Cui is Chinese rock music, everyone else is just an imitator. He isn't unaware of his position. "I feel two kinds of pressure: the pressure I put on myself and the pressure from others. I don't want to make the same music, that's boring. If you don't work hard, you go stale. If I listened to what others say, I should be satisfied with my position, but I'm not."



In contrast to the 80s, things are looking up for China's rock musicians. When rock started in China almost ten years ago, there was no money and seemingly no future. Now Chinese rock is blazing trails for other musical genres. Up and coming is 'city folk', acoustic music with more simple contemplations of China's place in the 1990s. Other musics — jazz, Techno, Hip-hop — may follow. They are currently in their infancy, with groups playing cover versions of tracks by Western performers the way Cui Jian once played Simon and Garfunkel songs.

There are still new frontiers for Chinese rock. Guo Chuanlin believes that concert tours will be possible sometime this year. Many groups, like Tang Dynasty, are gearing up for their next album. Beijing Television is producing a special programme on the city's rock scene. There's even a rock music school, Mida, operating in the university district of northern Beijing. Despite official resistance to rock and other obstacles to its acceptance, the music's audience is growing. Even if the situation weren't improving, none of the musicians seem concerned about losing their livelihood. As Zhang Ju says, "We're doing our own thing. We're looking for freedom in a place where there isn't much."

Footnote: The above interview with Tang Dynasty was conducted at the end of 1994. In May of this year, the group's bassist Zhang Ju was killed in a motorcycle accident. Despite the loss of one of the group's original members, Tang Dynasty manager Guo Dawei claims the group will continue.

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Jah Wobble

Halcyon Music/Fetish Recordings 10

Death Cube K — Dreamatorium (Subharmonic)
Lull — Journey Through Underworlds (Sentrad)
Trevor Wishart — Tongues Of Fire (Orpheus/The Panormme)
Metalheads — Timeless (ITM)
EBI — Zen (Space Teddy)
Various — Baby Of Macan: Original Soundtrack (Koch International)
Pete Namiook — Music For Ballet (Fax)
zovietfrance — What Is Not True (Charm)
Runaway Train — Runaway Train (Ash International)
Anthony Manning — Elastic Variations (India)

Compiled by Jarrie Saddy, Halcyon Music/Fetish Recordings

Anthony Braxton

The Office Ambience

Phonon On Mars — Ishkora Tanka (Too Pure)
Seed — Vertical Memory (Beyond)
Derek And The Ruins — Saishoro (Tzadik)
Alex Reece — Pulp Fiction (Metalheads 12")
Brian Eno & Jah Wobble — Spinner (All Saints)
Yona-Kit — Yona-Kit (Skin Graft)
Karlheinz Stockhausen — Mantra (Wergo)
Anthony Braxton — Charlie Parker Project: 1993 (Hut Hut)
Somo Somo — Ngobla (Sterns Africa)
Shinjuku Thief — The Witch Hunter (Doroba)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

Touch 10

Ryoji Ikeda — 1000 Fragments (CCL Recordings)
JLIAT — 16 05 94 (JLIAT)
Isolrubin BK — Crash Injury Trauma (Soleilmoon)
John Wall — Alterstiel (Utterspalm)
RLW — When Freezing Air Songs Like Ice (Streamline)
Gustav Mahler — Symphony No 2: Resurrection (Georg Solti/Decca)
Jim O'Rourke — Use (Mood)
Stars Of The Lid — Music For Nitrous Oxide (Sedimental)
Phaous — Godphaus (Silent)
Hiles Davis — Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud (Fontana)

Compiled by Mike Harding, Touch Records

Karlheinz Stockhausen

Sharp As A Needle 10

Dirty Three — Kim's Dret (Big Lard)
Chemical Brothers — Exit Planet Dust (Virgin/Junior Boys Own)
Spring Heel Jack — Lee Perry I-IV (Rough Trade)
Ry Cooder — Music Of (Wamers)
Baba Looney — Looney Vs Christ (Needlework)
Tortus — Sand (Demo)
Red Snapper — Reeled And Skinned (Warp)
Schlammpeitziger — Keine Star (Getriem)
Gentle People — Journey (Reshlex)
Whale — We Care (Hut/Virgin)

Compiled by John Kennedy, Sharp As A Needle, RTM 103.8 FM, Saturdays 8-11pm, also XFM 100 FM, Mon-Fri 12-2am

sound check

September's choicest CDs and albums — reviewed, revered, reviled

September winners:

King Crimson & Robert Fripp, Marcus Stockhausen, Derek Bailey & The Ruins

In soundcheck:

Robert Ashley, Blue Humans, Ry Cooder, Miles Davis, Martin Denny, The Fall, Peter Frohmader, Henryk Górecki, Peter Hammill, Andrew Hill, Roland Kirk, Loop Guru, Master Musicians Of Joujouka, Pete Namlook, Vidna Obmana, Jorge Reyes, Jah Shaka, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Yma Sumac, Ultramarine and more...

In brief:

Sprinting through the new Electronica, out rock and opera releases



WINNER

In the red

**King Crimson
B'Boom (Official Bootleg — Live
in Argentina 1994)**

DISCIPLINE GLOBAL MOBILE DGM 9503 CD

**Robert Fripp
A Blessing Of Tears (1995
Soundscapes Volume Two —
Live In California)**

DISCIPLINE GLOBAL MOBILE DGM 9506 CD

Recorded in Argentina last year on a DAT machine straight off the mixing desk at King Crimson's first shows for a decade, *B'Boom* has no post-production tampering, no mixing even, hence the live bootleg title. Robert Fripp is usually a perfectionist but these recordings took his fancy and were put out on a whim to

counteract doggy — and pricey — bootlegs.

King Crimson's recent studio album *Thrak* has been touted by many as at least a partial return to their 73-74 heyday. Although the inspired, semi-improvised approach that brought rock near its limits in those days has receded, it's fair comment. The music on *B'Boom* is based on another constant: Fripp's rifery. Diamond-hard, multi-faceted structures prevail — dissonant, angular, but always beautifully logical. It's pared brutally to the bone, with Fripp barely playing a solo throughout. New tracks like "Vroom" and "Thrak" display very similar forms to such old head-crunchers as "Red" and "Larks' Tongues In Aspic: Part II", also included here.

Fripp's keen to explain that the new sexier incarnation of the group is essentially two trinos of bass,

drums/percussion and guitar. The upside on this recording is the huge, monolithic guitar sound; the downside is that both basses merge into one, and the percussion — so thunderous and inventive on *Thrak* (recorded after these performances) — is tentative and towards the back of the soundfield.

Adrian Belew's vocals and lyrics are the comparative weak link, essentially acting as respite between the bouts of sonic bludgeoning. But anyone familiar with Gordon Haskell or Baz Burrell singing Pete Sinfield's hideously Rocco purple prose on Crimson's early 70s recordings will feel relatively spoilt.

Fripp's Frippertronics tape-delay system — in use since his 1973 collaboration with Eno, *No Pussyfooting* — was revamped on last year's solo release *1999 Soundscapes — Live In Argentina: A Blessing Of Tears*, the second volume in the 95 Soundscapes series, is a selection of live improvisations recorded in California earlier this year. The hardware is digital and more sophisticated now (as used on collaborations with FFWF, The Orb and Future Sound Of London), giving rise to gorgeous, hovering atmospheres. Putting technicalities to one side, the music that Fripp achieves here is beautiful. The poignant sleeve notes, based on Fripp's elegy to his recently deceased mother, contextualize the music's abstraction.

Massive trawls of sound flowed through 1999, but here the shifting, multi-effected, multi-tracked guitars evoke the cascading beauty of light pouring through stained glass. Though structurally nebulous, the hovering fragments of melody evoke the ecstatic devotionals of John Tavener or Arvo Part. Fripp's guitar playing, though peerless, rigorous and perpetually challenging, has never been so overtly emotional. This is guitar improvisation of rare, searing passion.

PINE BARNES

soundcheck

WIRE WINNER

Compromising positions

Markus Stockhausen

Possible Worlds

CMP 68 CD

Stand by your desks, dictionary editors. Markus Stockhausen has come up with a new word — 'compromisation' — which he applies to the creation of this brilliant new album, a 58 minute piece built on the foundations of a one-take free improvisation between Fabrizio Ottaviano (piano), Rohan De Saram (cello) and the leader Markus Stockhausen plays brilliantly. I had forgotten what a good, warm-toned jazz trumpeter he was until I heard his solos on *Europavino*, Sigg Lohr's 'jazzhorn' — these Germans love their portmanteau words — with Mike Gibbs and Joachim Kühn.

Additional overdubs from Stockhausen (playing trumpet, piccolo trumpet, slide trumpet and quarter-tone flugelhorn) and percussionist Ramesh Shortham, plus cliché-free electronics by brother Simon Stockhausen, have been added to create a thrilling end product, well structured, varied in musical content and orchestration, rhythmically sure (though without grooves) and full of wonderful sounds and a superb level of performance from all participants, including sound engineer and co-producer Walter Quintus.

Compromisation is not a new concept, though, surely improvisation lies at the heart of every decent composition, whether on score paper or tape? If it doesn't stick in English-speaking throats too much, the term can be applied retrospectively to recording artists as different as Simon H Fell, Mingus, Morgan Fisher, Sly Stone, Roger Doyle (the Irish electroacoustician), Talking Heads and Miles Davis, whose work with producer Teo Macero appears to be a guiding spirit upon this album.

Possible Worlds is entirely a record of our time because of the way the 90s technology of digital recording, editing and layering is used, with creativity, sensitivity and transparency. However 'out' he went, Miles — who'd been introduced to Stockhausen Sr's *Telemusik* and *Mixtur* during the late

Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be available at good specialist retailers or, increasingly, in high street megastores like HMV, Tower and Virgin. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as These, RTH, Impetus, Recommended, Vital, etc. . .

Amplexus: through Cargo

April: Sankt Jørgens Allé 7 og, 1615 København, Denmark

Audible Hiss: through Rough Trade Shop/Hall Order, 130 Talbot Road, London W11 1JA

Auvidis Montaigne: through Koch

Beyond: through Vital

Big Cat: through RTH/DISC

Bianco Y Negro: through WEA

Breakdown: through SRD

Che: through SRD

60s/early 70s — managed to carry the deep dark blue centre of American jazz with him. In a parallel way, Stockhausen Jr's has achieved something equivalent to infuse an unforced European sense of form and harmony into what could have been a diffuse mess. To describe this album in terms of the methods used (as so many contemporary composers and artists do) is misleading, since the same strategies could have led to disaster. What makes *Possible Worlds* great is the participants' knowledge that sincerity, instrumental virtuosity, musicality, ego-free group playing and a high technical standard may be necessary but they're not sufficient. They have figured out how to make a record.

Did I imply that Stockhausen has no ego? That can't be true, because the sound and melodic gestures of his trumpet playing dominate throughout. But it would seem that he has a jazz group leader's personality, one that inspires his collaborators and permits freedom, personal responsibility and always gives credit where it is due. This may be one of the best models for democracy we have. It is good to welcome these big, open-hearted channels of sound that confirm the fragile instinct that music is worth striving for, and that art can make our lives better.

JOHN L. WALTERS

WIRE WINNER

Scraps in metal

Derek & The Ruins

Saisoro

TRIADIC T27205 CD

Music to be played in the ear of every reader of *Guitar Player* and *Kerrang!* At last, accompanists have been found who can amplify the rock and blues fundamentals of Derek Bailey's guitar. The echo of Derek & The Dominoes in the group's name can be no accident, surely this is a bid for 'Layla' supremacy, counterpoise time for rock's blinkered heroes. If they hadn't been led to John McLaughlin's music school harmonies (and his one-dimensional, 'apron string' concept of soloing), The

Mahavishnu Orchestra might have sounded like this.

The Ruins (Masuda Ryuchi on bass, Yoshida Tatsuya on drums) have a reputation as a Tokyo punk band, worthy constituents of John Zorn's 'hardcore triangle'. However, the meaning of 'punk' has mutated since 1977. There is no homey amateurism here, The Ruins' chops are Bad Brains-like, fusion sharp. Tatsuya has the trenchant brutality of a Shamon Jackson. The punk element is not lumpy but advanced; they can hear right into Bailey's atonal intervals and abrasive clusters. Spontaneous evocations flower into spiky alien blooms, genuine metal music. There hasn't been such exciting guitar mayhem since the No Wave tide of James Blood Ulmer and Last Exit.

As a player, Derek Bailey has turned over a new leaf, for someone of his stature, this is a major achievement. The composer Anton Webern brought atonality and attention to negative (or silent) shapes into music. By applying these to rock/jazz practice, Bailey successfully kickstarted a new genre (it resists naming, but free improvisation will do). The difficulties of his BDs playing — interpreted by many as an aesthetically-correct denial of guitar power, an openness to accident and non-ego — now stand revealed as the essential gropings towards a new method. Shanachie Records has announced that Wirefora, a new duet album with guitarist Henry Kaiser, is the one to break Bailey in the States. But on that record, Kaiser swamps Bailey in One World sentimentality. Saisoro showcases his guitar as never before.

Bailey is actually as blues-riden as Charlie Parker. He has the bluesman's ability to weigh the impact of single chord, listen out for its unique timbral density. The Ruins, too, have an ear for sound rather than its official key/rhythm designation, this means they can pin Bailey's aching arcs and electric scrambles into accessible rockist structures. Instead of interpreting Bailey's pioneering spirit as a high-minded refusal of Grunge, they frame his split-spectrum tangents into big, responsive rock onslaughts.

There are calms in the storm. 'Shivaree' (sic) features Tatsuya's absurd falsetto, reminding us that



siliness was always part of heavy rock's dynamic (The Cream's Cookney singalong on *Disraeli Gears*; Frank Zappa's moustache). It's also a Japanese reply to the way that Western composers (from Mahler through to Boulez and Cage) have borrowed Noh Theatre grunts and yelps. "Manugan Melpo" sounds like a field recording; Bailey's volume pedal pushed to the limit, a pregnant hiss gradually reveals a Zen garden of birdsong and aqueous trickles. "Dhamra/Syrimwa" is abstract funk recalling Material or Massacre, the instrumental music The Gang Of Four never got round to. It's as if McLaughlin's piercing brilliance had been invaded by the black pearl grit and soul of Buddy Guy. Now that more people are making the nosebleed equation (Ascension, Skullflower, Martin Archer with Rancid Poultry), this album, released on John Zorn's Tzadik label, constitutes both benchmark and celebration. Encased in a beautiful sleeve by Ilse Mori, all gold leaf and crackled-glass prettiness, *Sosoro* is commodity-lust

provocation: a gem
REN WATSON

**Ascension
Live/Dead**
DIRTY DROMPL 31 LP

**The Blue Humans
Incandescence**
SHOCK SXQ28 CD/LP

**The Blue Humans
Live — NY 1980**
AUDIBLE HISS 003 CD

Three examples of the new wave of metal machine minimalism. Ascension (a dynamic UK duo made up of guitarist Stefan Jaworzyn and drummer Tony Irving) have packaged *Live/Dead* in the guise of a 60s bootleg, with jokey Grateful Dead-reference title and track details rubber-stamped onto a plain white LP sleeve. Thus free of all frills, Ascension's message is made louder and clearer. The 'Live' side features the duo's first performance from March 1993. What Ascension lack in lyrics they make up for

with playing techniques. Jaworzyn probes and strangles new notes from the guitar while Irving flays at his drum kit to produce beats and cymbal bursts that make the heart leap with excitement. Ascension write beautiful songs in sound and the crowd evidently loved them to death. The 'Dead' side is a studio session recorded two months later, and already a sense of progression and growth is in the air. The fury of the flailing guitar almost drowns out the drum patterns, but both parties are joined together inexorably and playing from the hip. Ascension's muscle has been built up through many different musical workouts, but one major influence is guitarist Rudolph Grey and his blistering Blue Humans. By way of tribute and celebration, Jaworzyn has issued a live Blue Humans recording on his Shock label. Recorded live at New York's notorious CBGBs club in 1988, *The Blue Humans* on this recording consist of Grey, the late jazz drummer Beaver Harris and (standing in for regular member Arthur Doyle) Borbetomagus saxophonist Jim Sauter

What issues forth is an explosion of carefully monitored cacophony. Grey makes his guitar gently weep tears of blood by injecting lethal doses of feedback into his playing while Harris weaves in and out of the maelstrom with skill and invention. This was the great drummer's last Blue Humans date, and *Incandescence* is a mighty tribute. *Live* — NY 1980 is more of the same, only further fleshed out by the insane sax blast of Arthur Doyle. Doyle's power packed and violent post-Ayer screech is the perfect foil for Grey's equally intense guitar bombardment, which, with Harris as the percussive leveller, transforms itself into something far more wholesome and spiritual than just damn noise. **EDWIN POWNEY**

**Robert Ashley
el/Afficionado**
LOVELY MUSIC LCD 1004 CD

The American composer and writer Robert Ashley (born 1930) first came to prominence in the early 1960s as one of the founding members of the

P E N T A T O N I K



G A S S / Z E I T G E I S T

"A breathtakingly original departure. Stunning." - *S/S RM* 'Single of the week'

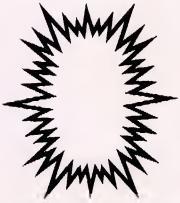
P E N T A T O N I K

NEW SINGLE ON CD (DWT3CD),
12" (DWT3K) AND LIMITED CD (DWT2CD)
NOT FROM THE DEBUT DOUBLE CD
'PENTATONIK' (DWT1CD)



pentatonic

Good music needs a good hi-fi



The Cornflake Shop

37 Windmill Street, London W1P 1HH
Voice 0171 631 0472 Fax 0171 436 7165

soundcheck

music theatre co-operative The ONCE Group. In 1966 he co-founded another influential group, Sonic Arts Union, established to perform electronic theatre compositions by himself, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mumma and David Behrman. During the 70s and 80s, Ashley's work continued to explore the interrelationships between experimental music and theatre, while expanding to encompass sung/spoken narrative-based pieces and film making collaborations. The composer calls these epic multimedia works 'operas', thus redefining the genre and charting a new operatic territory rich in possible future developments.

eLAlfonso is the fourth in a quartet of operas and, like its predecessors, *Perfect Lives* (1983), *Atlanta (Acts Of God)* (1985) and *Now Eleanor's Idea* (as yet unreleased, I believe), the new work is a substantial composition involving intricate, multi-layered sung/spoken narrative and instrumental lines. Where previous themes have centred on agriculture, architecture and genealogy, here the libretto's focus is espionage. As labyrinthine as a Robbe-Grillet novel, as pyth as a Pinter play, *eLAlfonso* comprises a series of debriefing sessions between a secret agent (bansone Thomas Buckner) and his three interrogators (Robert and Sam Ashley and Jacqueline Humbert). For 70 minutes the work sustains an atmosphere of uneasy calm brilliantly misty, microtonal electronics provide a sometimes barely audible backdrop to the vocal parts (check out Ashley's little 70s work on *Lovely Music, Automatons: Writing and Yellow Man With Heart With Wings*, for other superb examples of his low-key electronics). But don't confuse this with Ambient; Ashley's music requires your full attention to appreciate the subtle nuances of his unique soundworld. Buckner's excellent dictation conveys perplexity and repressed fear with every understated inflexion, while Robert Ashley's unmistakable oration is anodyne, aviscular, tinged with a sinister callousness. This is another mixing work by one of the world's leading composers of experimental opera.

CHRIS BLACKFORD



Cheaps: through Plastic Head

Clear: through RTH

CMIP: through SAN/Vital

Dirtier: through Cargo

Discipline Global Mobile: 01722 780187

DIW: through Harmonia Mundi

Domino: through RTH/DISC

Donemus: through Impetus

Ry Cooder The Music Of Ry Cooder RHINO 9362 45987 2CD

Appropriately, the breathless suspensions of Ry Cooder's laconic and haunting theme from *Pans, Texas* open this double CD retrospective of the guitarist's film music. Fixing an aesthetic in the lexicon of cinema for all time, this was a big moment in the development of 'magic realism'. Without this and other Cooder's scores, Sator could not have sped into a petrol sunset to the strains of Chris Isaac's 'Wicked Game' in David Lynch's *Wild At Heart*. The transition into American Gothic road music was an inevitable step and one which galvanised film students and independent directors alike.

As director Walter Hill (for whom Cooder has scored eight films) writes in the sleeve notes: 'As for Cooder's film music, suffice to say that it doesn't work in the traditional manner: doesn't underscore as much as it envelops, doesn't heighten the mood as much as it adds to the atmosphere — surrounds the story — supplies missing information — champions the mood rather than the event.'

The compilation covers some 11 feature scores over 16 years and was selected by the composer himself. As such, it is unusually sensitive in contextualising a varied but coherent body of work which shows Cooder exploring the possible terrains within the film discipline pretty freely. While his style as a player is always distinctive, his film music shows great flexibility in adapting to the unique needs of each particular project rather than stamping his own signature across the scores. It's this tendency which distinguishes him from the bulk of screen composers, and his scores become conspicuous for their discretion and empathetic qualities. There is a range of fine collaborators within this selection including George S. Clinton, Jon Hassell (on the brilliant score of *Treasure*), percussionist Jim Keltner and Van Dyke Parks. The CD includes pieces from *Southern Comfort* which have never been available before. Even if you owned most of these scores individually, this compilation is worth checking out both from a musical point of view and as an important cinematic document.

PAUL SCHÜTZE

Miles Davis Call It What It Is JNY ME6403 CD

Miles Davis En Concert Avec Europe One RIE 710460 CD

For a variety of reasons, a current, and perhaps somewhat revisionist attitude towards psychedelic jazz has meant that after years of oblivion, the music Miles Davis made between *Bitches Brew* and his (sadly not permanent) retirement in the mid-70s is in danger of over-exposure. I say this not out of some personal, clubby desire to keep this music occult, but because the stack of live 70s Miles bootlegs now being released highlight some of the immense problems this music raises as much as they illustrate its undeniable greatness.

Recorded just five months apart, in July and October 1973 respectively, *En Concert* and (for my money the better of the two records) *Call It What It Is* feature the same group: saxophonist Dave Liebman, guitarists Reggie Lucas and Pete Cosay, bassist and co-opted *Savoy* Wonder sideman Mike Henderson, drummer Al Foster and percussionist M'Pume — arguably the finest and most concise group that Miles would work with after the demise of the great 60s acoustic quintet.

It was a group with an instinctive understanding of what Miles wanted from his music at this point: blues voodoo, funk's apogee and unceasing cortex, post-Darmstadt electronic future-romance, a degree of proto-Fourth World experimenting, and ultimately, jazz's transcendence of even this material.

Yet despite the recent reawakening of interest in this music, and that of the small handful of other musicians ploughing largely the same furrow at the time — Mwadishie Herbie Hancock, early Weather Report, Eddie Henderson, Julian Priestner — it's remained almost entirely ignored by the greater music community. More than this, it's music that all its practitioners eventually gave up on. Miles hung in with it longer than his acolytes, who all sniffed the last fack of fusion more quickly, but when he returned in the 80s, he too opted to push a strain of streamlined digital jazz funk.

For such a richly fecund music, it's perhaps odd, or at least ironic, that the most potent, deviant and dangerous music of our own time has drawn its influence from apparently less self-consciously adventurous areas: disco, reggae, punk, Heavy Metal.

It's telling that the most lauded of all Miles's electric records remains *Bitches Brew*, even though it sounds more like a blueprint for the kind of music featured here. The great mistake is that after *Brew* almost all of Miles's output would be recorded outside the studio. Now we've all caught up with what pop's known for over 30 years — that the potential magic of recorded music lies beyond the vision and ability of the musicians involved — it's not too grand a claim to say that that 50 per cent of *Brew*'s success was down to Teo Macero's understanding of the recording studio's potential. The album's malevolent intensity owed as much to its giant reverberating echoes and dislocating tape edits as it did to the epic musicianship of its players.

Even the greatest of Miles's mid-70s live records — *Agharta*, *Porgy and Bess* — would severely miss out on recording studio alchemy. As, inevitably, do these recordings. That said, while these records will always remain frustrating for what they might have been, the tantalising glimpses they offer of a parallel musical universe are indispensable.

SIMON HOPKINS

James Dillon Ignis Nostr/Helle Nacht

AUDIS MONTAIGNE MQ 782038 CD

An unlikely encounter between New Complexity composition and Ancient Greek philosophy, brought to you under the auspices of The Grateful Dead Heracleus, writing before Socrates at the very beginnings of philosophy, believed the world was in perpetual flux, and the pre-Socratic writers are a confessed influence on Scottish composer James Dillon. That his orchestral work has appeared on disc — performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra — is thanks to the Rex Foundation, set up by Grateful Dead guitarist Phil Lesh.

This is music in constant flux, with glittering, tumbling masses of sound and little in the way of recognisable themes

But in many ways the music here is reminiscent of Old Complexity — the intended avoidance of themes in Elliott Carter's *Night Fantasies*, or even Big Daddy Schoenberg in pre-senile works like *Eworting*. The sleeve note writer, improbably, finds a basic impression of unity in the way the material of *Helle Nacht* is "derived from the portraits of a single, low (virtually sub-audio) frequency of 27.5 Hz." If he says so. The soundworld, however, recalls the awesome power of Carl Ruggles's *Sunreacher*, one of the neglected masterpieces of 20th century music. *Varèse* too is in the background. *Helle Nacht* (*Bright Night*) is a teeming, shimmering body of sound, *Ignis Nostr* (*Our Fire*) is more violent. Percussion is a vital feature of both works, including prominent steel drums in *Ignis Nostr*. Neither is devoid of late Romantic gestures, though. This is difficult, disturbing music, because of the large forces involved, it won't be widely performed. It's fortunate to have it on disc. And a second volume of Dillon's works — an album of chamber pieces — is due in the autumn.

ANDY HAMILTON

The Exploding Meet Cirrus Of Disharmony

FLARE 002 CD

The Exploding Meet Birds Of Grey (A Reconnaissance)

FLARE 003 2CD

Decade Of Dreams A Lifetime Of Vacations

FLARE (NO NUMBER) CD

Mark Carmody is the prime mover in these Canadian projects. Performances by both groups have a pleasingly provisional feel, and the albums by The Exploding Meet have the smack of genuine experimentation: the edges are soft blurred and the shrink-wrap hasn't yet been sealed.

Decade Of Dreams is the less adventurous project. Though it makes use of occasional choruses of brutes, concretos or syntheses from familiar tunes, it's plain of rock 'n' roll. Carmody's songs, as well as his delivery, gentleness generously towards The Velvet Underground, and there are also nods to The Doors and Pink Floyd. There are

some accessible, even memorable melodies, especially from Gary Ingersoll — though he's a trifle heavy on the Country flavouring at times. Overall its good and honest, but I don't expect to play it all through very often.

The Exploding Meet albums are far more stimulating. *Birds Of Grey* assembles tracks recorded between 1981 and 1990 (though, apparently, the group's first performance for an audience was not until July 1985), whilst *Cirrus Of Disharmony* documents three concerts from May 1992 and July 1993. The group has adopted the tongue-in-cheek label 'Heavy Ambient'. For an easy description the tag will do, though for a checklist of influences it's inaccurate because incomplete, as Dylan said, "Open your ears and you're influenced". Playing the connections-and-antecedents game, I reckon I spotted suggestions of The Mothers, Fred Frith, Soft Machine, Bill Laswell, GF Fitzgerald, Skinny Puppy, before I gave it up as fun but futile. Fundamentally, the group has a late 80s ear — that's not a knock, just an observation — like something you might have heard on a John Peel session when the show was at its unsurpassed best. The Meet work with sound collage, tape manipulation, sampling, field recordings of street environments, plus plenty of other stuff, but underpins most of it with fluent industrial-strength rock. There is much elegantly cutting, densely sinuous and ether-shredding, grandstanding guitar from Carmody. He also plays some admirable bass, as does Jo Petrie. The music is insistent (occasionally bordering on the relentless), agitating, grimly poetic, raucous, atmospheric, hypnotic, sometimes provoking, sometimes cluttered, sometimes listenable.

BARRY WITENDEREN

The Fall 27 Points

PERMANENT PERM 36 2CD/2MC/2LP

This road goes on forever. The Fall, it seems, will always be with us. Mark E. Smith has become a sort of alternative Van Morrison, doggedly playing his trade, showing flashes of inspiration amid his regular, if not always consistently satiating, output. Now something of an institution, there is something both reassuring and unsettling about the prospect of a marathon live release

STOOLPIAAT

Soviet France
Popular Soviet Songs
and Youth Music (SCD)
Legendary Pink Del
From Here You'll Watch
The World Go By
H. Slaughter Natives
White My Stain
Pink Del
Maroon
Moon:
Species of Fish
Songs of a dumb world
O Yuki Conjugate
Sonic Chemical
Rapoon
The Highbly Light (2001)

In MULTIMOOD:
PETER FROMMANN
Homunculus parts 1-4
RINOCEROS
PETER FROMMANN
S. M. E. WORKS
STANNON HUNGNESS
Various Symphony no.1
An all-encompassing
multi-dimensional
transformation of shifting
and transforming
sound sculptures
JOHN BLANCH ENSEMBLE
JOHN BLANCH ENSEMBLE
JOHN BLANCH ENSEMBLE
JOHN BLANCH ENSEMBLE

Stoolpiaat
P.O. Box 1453-1001
NL 2000 Gardam
The Netherlands
phones: 31206254176
fax: 31206239281
Order through
Rital Distribution
0117 986 3300
all sales info.
St.M Ltd 0181 9080199

soundcheck

from The Fall. Broadly speaking, in 'rock' terms live albums traditionally serve as either contractual fillers or mass marketed tour souvenirs for the hardcore fanbase. There are glorious exceptions, where a live recording succeeds in capturing something special and preserving it, but 27 Points isn't one.

Over the album's two hours, it's a widely uneven collection. The sound veers from being slightly rough around the edges to the muffled thud of a quiet average bootleg. Well yeah, so The Fall are probably supposed to sound uncompromising and unfazed by such bourgeois notions as audio quality, but the poor sound makes it feel like a very long two hours.

The first disc is easily outshone by the second. It's not really until the arrival of "Pinnz" that things start to look up. And a real sense of momentum isn't achieved until several tracks later when the mighty "High Tension" arrives and The Fall give us murderous Europop dissolving in a welter of fuzz and hard beats. With the commencement of disc two the album reaches a high point with an unholy trinity of "Glam Rocket", "Lost In Muse" and "Mr. Pharmacist". The sound's better, with the group in cracking garage-thrash form and Smith's voice holding its own in the mix. There are further highlights, "Paranoid Man" and the latterday Fall classic "Middle Class Revolt", for example (showcasing the welcome return of Brn Smith to the line-up), but there's also a distinct lack of consistency with the murky "Strychnine" and the appalling "Bill Is Dead".

There are odd spoken excerpts, soundcheck dialogue and incoherent stage banter, I guess, to add a spontaneous dressing to the whole thing, but really it all sounds too pedestrian. There's half a good live album here, among the more inspired moments, but it's up to the listener to seek it out with the CD programming button.

In "10 Commandments" Smith tells us, "You are operation mindfuck on the children of this land". If only.

TOM RIDGE

Peter Frohmader Homunculus/Ritual

MULTIMOOD MRC 030 2 CD

If there's Muzak in hell, Peter Frohmader owns the copyright. This mammoth and masterly CD coupling of



Drag City: through Cargo

Electrobeat: through Pinnacle Import

Fax: through Pinnacle Import

Fie: through Vital

Flare: 114 McKeen Street,
Fredericton, New Brunswick,
Canada E3A 2R1

Hat Hut: through Karmonia Mundi

Homestead: through Southern

two of the finest from the Bela Lugosi of Industrial rock (both recorded in 1985) should bear a sticker reading 'Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here'.

But like Virgil leading Dante through the Inferno, Frohmader guides us through a nightmarishcape not of unremitting evil but of startling beauty. He has a peerless way with timbre and texture which borders, in *Ritual*, on the cinematic; similarly, the intermittent ceremonial and bagpipe tones which ricochet around the imposing edifice of the 92 minute *Homunculus* are cases in point. At times Frohmader seems to take his long day's journey into night a bit rapidly, and breathtaking electronic designs fill past too quickly.

Frohmader's been described as a 'Wagnerian' composer, and he does bring a dignified symphonic dimension to his creations, with identifiable sonic architecture and rhythmic diversity (the tempo changes on *Homunculus* are akin to the differing stride patterns of a long walk). *Ritual*, with its foundry clangs and parade drums, is even more conventional, although the teeming invention never flags. It might almost be the work of Jean-Michel Jarre's evil twin. Listen to the airy spaces of the tropospheric "Trance" section and its swirling weather system of synths and suspended cymbals, or the bounce-and-bubble sequencer undercarriage of "Part 5: Arrival" holding a warbling broken toy melody together.

Recommended

PAUL STUMP

Henryk Górecki Kleines Requiem Für Eine Polka/Harpischord Concerto/Good Night

ELEKTRA NONESUCH 7559 79362 CD

Since the success of his Third Symphony catapulted him into the media glare, most have equated Górecki's music with some sort of personal suffering — a kind of exorcism in sound. Recent releases such as *Beatus Vir* have done little to dispel this view, so the mention of the word 'polka' in connection with the Polish composer will probably cause a few raised eyebrows. In fact, the piece is as austere as any he has recently composed. What sets it apart is its sense of cryptic contradiction, inherent in the title itself, but mostly in the middle two

movements. These, despite setting up the illusion of 2/4 time, are in fact far removed from the merry conventions of the polka, carrying instead a feeling of desolation and loss more in keeping with his First String Quartet — Górecki is not one to use the word 'Requiem' lightly. Ironically framed by the serenity of the opening and closing sections, this is one of his most enigmatic works.

The *Concerto For Harpsichord And String Orchestra*, composed in 1980, features Elizabeth Chojnacka, to whom Górecki dedicated the work. As with any harpsichord composition the key reference point is Bach, and the baroque influence can certainly be felt in the piano figures of the first movement, in contrast to the strings which seem to be drawn from church song. The second movement, however, dispenses with all external influences, looking back to the composer's own *Three Dances* and reveling in its own lively joy. In contrast to *Polka*, this is one of the most exuberant of all Górecki's compositions.

Good Night, written in memory of Michael Vyner, the man credited with introducing Górecki to a British audience, is a 'difficult' work, due mainly to its unusual scoring: soprano, alto flute, three tam-tams and piano. Its subject matter, and the voice of Dawn Upshaw in the soprano role, invite superficial comparison with the "Sorrowful Songs" of the Third Symphony, but it's more of a meditation than a lament. Comprising three extremely slow movements, the static quality of the work may try the listener's patience. But the final movement, featuring Upshaw's voice, accompanied by a single piano chord and the sonorous dream waltz of the tam-tams, is very hypnotic.

PETER MCINTYRE

Sofia Gubaidulina/Galina Ustvol'skaya In Croce/Grand Duet For Cello And Piano

KOCH 3 7258 CD

Górecki/Pärt/ Ustvol'skaya Piano Sonatas/Preludes

KOCH 3 7301 CD

The 'lady with the hammer' returns. When I reviewed some recordings of

Galina Ustvolskaya's music in *The Wire* 133, she was still an almost unknown quantity. Now she is following Arvo Pärt, Görech and Schnittke into Western celebrity. Her music is certainly Hammer horror, though without the vampires. The bleakness of Ustvolskaya's vision, expressed in incessant keyboard pounding and desolate melodic fragments, is the consistent feature of her style.

But there's also all this strand of surrealism. Gross/Duer for cello and piano suggests something brilliant and superficial — qualities of which Ustvolskaya is incapable. With its extreme registers her music is hardly pianistic. Equally circumscribed, but at the opposite sort of extreme, is the quiet minimalism of *Anno Domini* — less effective when heard on the second of these releases, which features David Arden's solo piano. Part's success resulted from shrewd marketing by the ECM label, Ustvolskaya's music could never be a 'New Age' success. The jury must still be out on her Russian companion Sofia Gubaidulina, and — I reckon — Henryk Górecki, despite his mega-success with the Third Symphony. These two are more prolific, varied and uneven composers: Górecki's marketing was by Classic FM rather than ECM, and after the hype came the doubts, but then chart-topping popularity never went down well with the critics. The spiky style of his piano pieces — derived from Bartók and Prokofiev — will be unfamiliar to fans of the Symphony of Sorrowful Songs (The sleeve note tells us, hysterically, that after its belated fame in 1992, this became 'The incongruous favourite work of British punk rockers who used it to kick out the').

The second album here, featuring cellist Maya Beser, contains Gutwirth's cello and organ work in Croce-Beser's flamboyant, singing tone means she gives an over the top accompaniment, but with this composer, sometimes the emotion seems fake. This is an album which shows the versatility of contemporary performers — Beser is a member of The Bang On A Can All-Stars, while organist Dorothy Papadacos has played with Philip Glass, Jessye Norman and Max Roach (in her spare time she is organist at the Cathedral of St John The Divine in New York). It's a pity that Koch have spread Ustvolskaya's music over the two discs.

but the quality of the cello playing makes Beiser's album the favourite
ANDY HAMILTON

Peter Hammill In A Foreign Town

FIP REF 9108 CD

Peter Hammill

Out Of Water

FBI FIE 9109 CD

Peter Hammill
Room Temperature — Live

REF: 9110200

1988-90, the years spent under contract to the now defunct US label Enigma, were not the happiest of times for Peter Hammill. Indifferent marketing and distribution of his albums turned an undersung 'minority artist' into practically an invisible one. Hammill's own Fiel label, established in 1991, has now licensed back the three albums that trickled out from that earlier deal.

In A Foreign Town (1988) is disappointing, however — arguably his most anaemic release. With Hammill playing everything, it all sounds a bit too studio-smooth. The usually spiky, angst-ridden vocal energy is tempered by characterless electronics, regimented by over-emphasised drum machines, the early intimacy of *'Time To Burn'*, the most promising piece, suddenly becomes MOR monumentalism.

Stewart group members John Ellis, David Jackson, Nic Potter and Stuart Gordon were recalled for *Our Oyster* (1990), a generally more satisfying release which turned up two Hammill classics "Our Oyster," a poignant assessment of the media coverage of the suppressed Chinese student uprising in Tiananmen Square, and the meticulously observed, humid, seedy atmosphere ("Places disappear, but the names endure as alibis") of a Spanish nightspot in "Something About Ysabel's Dance," arranged for acoustic guitar and violin.

The same year, a double live album of recordings taken from the North American *Out Of Water* tour by the Hammill/Gordon/Potter trio was released in America, but nigh on impossible to find over here. *Room Temperature* is as perfect an illustration of Hammill's delectable universe as you're likely to hear. Free from post-

production embellishment, the sound quality is as appropriately austere as Van Der Graaf's live classic, *Vito!* (1978), and light years away from the near commercial sheen of *In A Foreign Town*.

The drummerless, chamber rock trio reworks the material (drawn from the late 60s to 1990) with effortless vigour, transforming midding pieces like 'After The Show' and 'Tramtime' into major works, rediscovering half-forgotten gems like 'The Wave' and 'The Comet, The Course, The Tail', and salvaging the elegant intimacy of 'Time To Burn'. Potter's bass plays straight to Hammill's persuasive keyboards and Gordon's searing violin textures, boosted by disciplined polyphonic effects. Of course, it's Hammill's extraordinarily expressive vocal range (at its ferocious best on 'The Future Numb') that drags the listener into his chiaroscuro world, seething with enough expressed and repressed melodramatic hysteria and existential dread to fill several Inger Bergman screenplays. As a rock lyricist, you'll need to look to the best of the Americans (Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Lou Reed) to find his equal, though he enjoys a mere fraction of their adulation. Peter Hammill is UK rock's literary giant, ludicrously marginalised and under-rated. The 21 performances on *About Temperature* are classics.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Ornoide Hatoba
Kinsai

MELDUC MECI-28001 CD

Hosono Haruomi
Tropical Dandy

NIPPON CROSS CROP 30001 CD

From Osaka, home of The Boredoms (with whom they share guitarist Yamamoto), come rock scrap merchants Omo. Their starting point, for Westerners seeking orientation, are familiar enough: the weathered signposts of Faust and John Zorn indicate the territory. There's a couple of good psychedelic rock songs, an efficient Neul pasche, a discarded, sleepy ballad, lots of mucking about with tape (Shades of This Heat), some champing, Jeff Cotton-style guitar work, lots of distortion, some Pop Groupish distended funk, and a foray into lame.

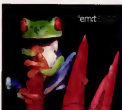
Invention doesn't fit in convenient niches



artikl:stevnenski people's gang 3305 format:cd
catalogue:3305 available:now



artistbook titlesonly? format=cataloguecomb440
available now



arxiv:1605.03555 [hep-th] 10 Jun 2016

For the vibrating air enthusiasts

A collectors series from ~~the same~~ recordings.

RSS 輝
 フェアtime®
 recording

These recordings have been spatially expanded using the Roland® Sound Space 2-D sound imaging system. Available from RMC, Old Price, Virgin, Ambient Asia, Javelin, Echo Records [Greece], Mile Lloyd & other licensing retailers, distributed by Pioneer (UK), Rough Trade (Germany), Watac & Silent (USA), PMS (Netherlands), Media 7 (France), Shogun (Australia), Sound Service (Switzerland), Russia (Italy) & Roedel-Music (South America). email is a deletion of two recording titles also available now: m069094, watac7194, soundc294, c013294, gsa0005, m069094, email:info@rta.com?more=regimes? or 0185 985 1005 - 0185 541 2277 x. 00004325@wcm.computer

soundcheck

heartless 'reggae' of the kind that many Japanese groups seem periodically to favour (it's here that notions of their entire ease with 'inherited' forms breaks down). A spot-the-reference list doesn't do justice to the group, though, the point being that it sounds coherent, heartfelt, intelligent and is perhaps more listenable than all the aforementioned putative — imagined — sources. It's all assembled with such skill and boundless energy as to sound fresh to the most blasé aural transporter.

For readers wishing to conduct some historical research into Japanese rock, *Tropical Dandy* is indispensable. This is Hosono's first solo album (from 1975) and is a kind of landmark. It demonstrates the unexpected influence of Van Dyke Parks, who a couple of years earlier had produced the last album by Japan's first truly independent-minded combo, Happy End. Opening with an ever so slightly warped cover of "Chattanooga Choo Choo", it's Hosono's *Discover America*, sharing with that gem a lush, hallucinatory quality infectious, veering towards kitsch, it mixes louche cabaret music, rock and traditional instruments with (for its time) state of the art synths, judiciously employed choruses and string sections, and ersatz environmental sound — a song cycle self-produced with some flair in its wake came not only Yellow Magic Orchestra, a consolidation of Hosono's Yellow Magic Band, but the eccentricities of outfits like Wha Ha Ha and Hanawa — radical groups whose work is clearly heralded in this, the subtly extraordinary first stage of the thoroughly compelling late 20th century trajectory of an identifiably Japanese rock music. 30 quad from Tower Records

ED BAXTER

Andrew Hill
The Complete Blue Note Sessions (1963-66)
MOSAC MD7-161 CD

If you wanted to create a fictional out figure, you could do worse than to copy the life and career of Andrew Hill. His early life was shrouded in mystery, he claimed to have been born in Haiti, when in fact he's a native Chicagoan. Playing professionally while still in his teens, he backed local and touring big names, showed such promise for 'serious' composition that Paul



Hyades Arts: Calle Trujillos, 7, 30 D
(Edificio Trujillos), 28013 Madrid, Spain

lonic: through RTM/DISC

JMY: through Harmonia Mundi

Keda: 13 Salsgate Lane, Temple Cowley, Oxford OX4 4EW/48
Court Place Gardens, Ilfley, Oxford OX4 4EW

Kickin': through SRD

Koch: through Koch

Lovely Music: through Impetus

Hindemith offered him lessons. Touring with Dinah Washington took him to New York, Roland Kirk brought him to LA, but it wasn't until Alfred Lion of Blue Note heard him on Joe Henderson's first record for the label that people took notice. Lion was so impressed with Hill's burgeoning originality that he brought him, performing only his own music, into the studio for five different sessions within an eight month period in 1963-64.

These remarkable records epitomized Hill's against the grain musical approach, in a time of rampant freedom, with Coltrane and Ayler in all their furious glory, the key to Hill's success was organisation. Breaking up conventional phrase lengths, alternating uneven meters and feeding unpredictable harmonies, Hill was cutting jazz into new shapes and redesigning the pieces of the puzzle together into a picture of compelling beauty. The closest analogy would be with Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols — "McNeil Island", from the *Black Fire* LP, sings with the same lyrical poignancy as "Ruby My Dear" or "Greensleeves With Nellie" from a different perspective. "Reconciliation", from *Judgement*, has Nichols's fragmented melodicism and stop-start swing down cold.

More importantly, Hill shared Monk's and Nichols's concern to empty quality drummers. For his first five records he used Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams and Joe Chambers. Jones is an enormous presence on *Judgement*, prodding and poking the acute angles without overpowering the horn-less quartet, and Williams's airy, ambiguous pulse helped open up *Point Of Departure* so that saxophonists Eric Dolphy and Joe Henderson had room to manoeuvre.

Point Of Departure is an indisputable masterpiece. Hill orchestrates the horns with a flair Nichols, who was never allowed such a luxury on his own recordings, might have envied. Dolphy burns blisters trying to escape the asymmetrical labyrinth, Henderson may not have Dolphy's waywardness, but knows the twisting, shadowy landscape of Hill's music better than anyone. Compare his reliability with the trouble John Gilmore has on the subsequent session. For all his experience on alien terrain, Gilmore seems uncomfortable with Hill's unorthodox chord changes,

until the atypical *Compulsion* date where, finally freed from restrictive harmony, his modal lines float on augmented percussion vapors. Virtuosity isn't the issue — Freddie Hubbard's excesses are over the top in his flamboyant escapades, while Bobby Hutcherson's cool, crisp vibes are a natural complement to Hill's own distinctive piano touch.

After a series of less successful or unreleased dates for the label (including ones with string quartet, choir and big band, none of them represented here), Hill left Blue Note, recorded some different albums for less visible companies and eventually faded back into obscurity. He reappeared in the 90s, made a few critically acclaimed CDs, but failed to catch the attention of the powers-that-be and continues to hover on the fringe of public awareness, far from the stardom his amazing music once predicted and deserved. Now that these early, exhilarating recordings are available once again, let the rediscovery commence.

ART LANGE

William Hooker
Armageddon
HOMESTEAD H45223 CD

High on 20 years of musical activity is beginning to bear fruit for percussionist William Hooker, as the New York 'ecstatic jazz/funk rock noise bourgeois' recently he's been working with Donald Miller of Borbetomagus, Elliott Sharp and Sonic Youth's Moore and Randall. His latest is a studio set featuring a different line-up on each track (unlike last year's *Radiation*, which was a live recording of his quartet).

Hooker is a group leader and he likes to be way out front in the mix. *Armageddon* is essentially a series of mammoth drum solos played over twisted, inconclusive backdrops. By turns entrancing and uninviting, it's a slab of outright unenimability, that, at its best, pummels the body like a violent massage. While the conceptual world of 60s free jazz is evoked in the titles ("Spirit World" and "Time Within"), many of the accompaniments are entirely free from jazz. There's some fairly desultory sax playing, which is subdued by Hooker's percussive barrage anyway, and some remarkably traditional string-bending rock hysteria.

Hooker's playing is perpetually on the cusp, but however fractured, it never loses sight of a deep, regular pulse. This is no wild thrashing, despite the aura of crackling overload in his collaborators' contributions. However, in the end the thinness of their work leads to a wearing lack of variation in register.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Hans Kennel Mythorns 2 HAT HUT ART6151 CD

In the wake of Harry Lime's famous remark about cuckoo clocks, it's easy to consign Swiss culture to a wooden shedful of unwanted alpine souvenirs. And the playful postmodern prattlers of its most eminent and eminently forgettable oddballs, Yello, or the ultimately hollow bluster of metalheads like The Young Gods make it difficult to even want to rush to its defence. So it's all the more wondrous when Swiss composers like Heinz Holliger (a tad unfairly dished in *The Wire* 137) and Hans Kennel advance the music culture by reappropriating those uniquely Swiss elements which have become the stuff of kitsch folklore.

Kennel's achievement is all the more credible for its redemption of the giant, unwieldy aliphorn. Furthermore, he pulls it off not by ignoring those mountain folk elements of postcard notoriety, but by incorporating their lowing sighs in modern compositions that are all the more poignant for sating them on board. The instrument comes into its own when, as here, it's combined with any number of its kind, each pitched at variance with the others and blown so as to set up the resonances that produce the rising layers of overtones that constitute much of this music's attraction. Kennel's own compositions make great intriguing play with the low end overtone activity that occurs when upwards of four of these beast-like horns lock into a groove.

If it's impossible to get aliphorn music to dance, but you can make it turn slowly with a deal of dignity and grace (although on 'Alphorn Of Plenty', which he composed for Mythra, Moondog manages to work the instrument against type by making it belch and cut graceful rounds both at once). Watch the sun go down over the mountains to this music

and suddenly Harry Lime's remark doesn't appear so cute any more.

BIBA KOPF

Rahsaan Roland Kirk The Case Of The 3 Sided Dream In Audio Color ATLANTIC 781 396 CD

Rahsaan Roland Kirk Simmer, Reduce, Garnish & Serve — The Warner Brothers Recordings WARNERS 9362 48511 CD

Despite the huge physical hurdles that life threw in his way (blind practically from birth, a stroke at 39, partial paralysis from then until his death from a further stroke), Rahsaan Roland Kirk committed an act of worship with every note he blew. But Kirk's spiritualism was lower case all the way. These two resissues from towards the end of his life hardly see him at the height of his powers either physically or creatively, but both offer glimpses of what had made him great, and both reveal his undying sense of transcendence at the heart of the banal.

Recorded before his split with Atlantic, *The Case Of The 3 Sided Dream In Audio Color* — great title, great sleeve — promised much. A collage of conversations and beautifully detailed dream sequences (a game of ping-pong, a snatch of Billie Holiday on a distant radio, the voice of some *Electric Ladyland*-outtake *Deus ex-machina*) connect a sequence of songs at once traditional (a stunning miniature rendition of 'Bye Bye Blackbird', a rather more meandering blues take on 'The Entertainer') and contemporary, with Kirk's well-stated R&B and funk fixation on full display.

But by now Kirk's Vibrator Society had embraced the cream of America's fusion, jazz line and session superstars: Ralph MacDonald, Steve Gadd, Hilton Ruiz, Richard Tee, Cornell Dupree. And they work their material with such thorough-going professionalism that even Rahsaan's most outlandish flights are mired in slickness. The results are a potent psychosocialist-dance jazz masterpiece left unmade.

Kirk moved from Atlantic to Warners, along with long-time producer Joel Dorn. Dorn himself has compiled *Simmer, Reduce, Garnish & Serve*,

drawing material from Kirk's last three albums, *The Return Of The 5000lb Man*, *Kirkatron* and *Boogie Woogie Spring Along For Real*, along with unreleased material from the 1976-78 period.

This was the period of Kirk's greatest illness, of course, (he had his first stroke during the recording of *Kirkatron*, subsequently learning to play with his right-hand side only) and the sense of sheer will evident in his performances throughout this set, and his love of the material — blues, spirituals, ballads, cocktail bar jazz — is deeply moving. And Warners evidently allowed him and Dorn more room to manoeuvre than had Atlantic, the apparently urgent need of the *3 Sided Dream* sessions to introduce Kirk to a younger, wider audience quite rightly went out the window. Possibly from deference to Kirk's state, possibly from a premonition that these dates would become his last will and testament, his accompanists walk the same path as their leader and share his playful sense of wonder.

As with his previous Kirk compilation, *The Man Who Cried Fire*, Dorn (Hal Wilner's mentor, and boy, can you tell it from this collection) approaches his friend's work with love and a shared sense of absurdity. Never mind all those completist-leishats, always on the lookout for one more rarity, and to whom a 'distillation' (Dorn's own word) like this is anathema, few completions have such an affinity with their subject. But then few completions worked intimately for over 20 years with their subject. And none have Kirk.

SIMON HOPKINS

Steve Lacy Quartet Revenue SOUL NOTE 121234 CD

Few sounds in music are as unique and memorable as Steve Lacy's soprano saxophone. Only a handful of musicians living and working today encompass such a huge chunk of jazz's history (Dwight Dillard, Monk to Cecil Taylor), while none have absorbed it in quite such a stubbornly individualistic manner, eloquently described in *Findings*, Lacy's recent book of advice, stories and aphorisms. Since the 1970s, Lacy's direction and group have shown remarkable stability and resilience, and if his timbre and sensibilities have softened a little, it seems no more than an apt

KATE ST JOHN *indescribable night* ASCD25



FEATURING

Georgie Fame

Virginia Astley

Brian Kennedy

**THIRTEEN GLORIOUS TRACKS,
COUNTLESS GREAT REVIEWS,
ONE BRILLIANT ALBUM**

St John proves her own woman
on her solo debut
THE OBSERVER

Bliss (****)

Q

Indescribable Night is an
impressively lush, lissome
and enjoyable affair
TIME OUT

Sophisticated, charming,
whimsy free
MOJO

Fitting from the sunny and
innocent to the smoky and forlorn
NME

A superb
multi-instrumental talent
THE DAILY MAIL

An accomplished,
unashamedly romantic work
WIRE

**AVAILABLE AT: VIRGIN, HMV, OUR PRICE,
TOWER AND INDEPENDENT STORES**

Distributed by **Vital Distribution**



**All Saints Records
P.O. Box 2767, London NW1 8HU**

soundcheck

reflection of his age and the times, his edge and energy remain very much intact.

Revenue, recorded in 1993, further distills the ideas, materials and compositions which have kept him busy for 20 or more years. Most of the pieces are dedications and 'portraits', though it would be difficult to deduce which tunes are dedicated to Robert Creeley, Jimi Hendrix, Stan Getz or Steve Wonder without Lacy's sleeve notes. Lacy's solos seem tenser than ever, as if he's happy just to listen to the others. "This Is It", the best track here, and "I Do Not Believe" are both particularly beguiling examples of his pensive, rhythmic displacements. Steve Potts's expressionistic, metallic alto and wayward, boppy soprano seem, by contrast, about as far from Lacy's own deliberations as you could get. JJ Avonni is a remarkable bass player, and gets more remarkable with each album. His ensemble playing adds a necessary pulsating heart to the music, while his solos and duets with drummer John Betsch have a funky freshness and a sense of sheer originality that make them some of the most engrossing moments here. It's a shame the production is a little rough and tends to emphasise the harsher outer edges of Lacy's music rather than the warm heart at its core. *Soul Note* really should have got this side of things together by now.

RICHARD SCOTT

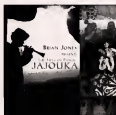
Loop Guru Amrita

NORTH SOUTH 200 CD/MC/PL

Loop Guru Possible Futures EP

NORTH SOUTH 002 CD/12"

These two new releases show Loop Guru in epic pomp and circumstance mode as they give us a tour of their sample library "Possible Futures", a four track EP, attempts to tread the fine line between Fourth World symbiosis and Mesogad ethno-cruising. "Yay!", with its rousing tabla and gamelan rhythms peering out over the edge of processed dub beats, manages to cover old ground with grace and finesse. The looped, mellotron treatment of "The New Look Of Landscape Gardening" drones fetchingly, like Spacemen 3 without guitars. Elsewhere, though, Loop Guru sound like they're flitting with the ad executives who run



Patador: through Vital

Meldad: through Rough Trade
Shop/Mail Order, 130 Talbot Road,
London W11 1JA

Mille Plateaux: through SRD

Mode: through Harmonia Mundi

No Wax: through Vital

M Records: Olyhorststraat 38,
6691 he, Gendt, The Netherlands

Multimood: through Plastic Head

the Carlsberg campaign "Skol" sounds alarmingly like a nuevo-trad Scottish rock group — its aura of pastoral myth and history reverberating like the windbaggy of the British Tourist Board.

The ceremonial ambience continues on *Amrita*. It feels like a requiem: the solemn mellotron creeps up again surrounded by sombre flutes, pining female vocals and wistful bird chirps. *Amrita* is stuck in the middle ground between spirit and gravity. For all the wisp, ethereal textures threatening to float away on a waft of instrumental incense, there's the moody, dubtappa slow-burn of "Fumi" bringing things back to earth. While the numerous samples of Gregorian chant speak of the urge to transcend the flesh, the disc's House rhythms and Soul II Soul-like beats ground the music in the body.

Like *Dunya*, Loop Guru's debut album, *Amrita* is born of the ruptures from the fall-out of Acid House. The imperative of dance music is now the rhythm of life for an entire generation. Loop Guru's problem is to create a musical vocabulary in which the lexicon of love is replaced by an equally intriguing language for home consumption. Unfortunately, the challenge hasn't been wholly met by these two releases.

PETER SHAPIRO

Mike Mainieri An American Diary

NYC 60152 CD

This release is a surprise move on the part of Mainieri, especially as he's accompanied here by two fellow-travellers (Eddie Gomez and Peter Erskine) from that most culpable of funk bands, Steps Ahead. In fact it serves to remind us just how these tremendously gifted players sacrificed their integrity to the lure of muso lucre in the aforementioned line-up.

American Diary is a more than diverting collection of American classical standards and group originals arranged beautifully for a vibes/reeds/drums/bass quartet. It should be stated that Mainieri's choice of American classical material is utterly conservative, with only William Grant Still's "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" adding a few minutes of blackness to what he tries to pass off as a kind of homage-paying pageant of

the US musical muse. The avant garde is sketchily represented (Frank Zappa and, er, that's it), yet pieces like Roger Sessions's *Piano Sonata No 1* and Barber's overture to *The School For Scandal* are refurbished with an engaging whimsy and played with discipline and elegance by an empathetic group (Joe Lovano's clarinet and soprano horn playing a particular revelation, notably in the waltzed-up retreat of Bernstein's "Somewhere").

The dedication that Mainieri has lavished on this work diminishes any uncharitable 'concept album' slurs and it's regrettable that his take on the music of others casts his own material (and that of Erskine and Gomez) in a somewhat pallid and bloodless light. Still, his "In The Universe Of Ives" is a fascinating tightrope walk between the anarchy of improvisation in Ives's own compositional method and Mainieri's enthusiasm for and rigorous application of academic musical form.

PAUL STUPP

The Master Musicians Of Jajouka Brian Jones Presents The Pipes Of Pan At Jajouka

POINT 456 487 CD

The Master Musicians Of Jajouka Jajouka Black Eyes

SUS ROSA 87 CD

There is currently some hot controversy over the identity of the true Master Musicians Of Jajouka (at least two ensembles claim the title). Back in 1971, when the first of these albums was released, things were simpler, perhaps.

It features field recordings made in Jajouka by Brian Jones, who was terrified and fascinated by The Master Musicians he invited them to tour with (The Rolling Stones). It is marred by some really nasty production: chorus and stereo panning effects which give an impression of what Jones thought he heard rather than what the musicians were actually playing. Also, with three decades' hindsight, much of the music is not that good. "Your Eyes Are Like A Cup Of Tea" is the greatest exception: one of the most extreme ten minutes of noise ever witnessed by magnetic tape. The group sound monstrous, reaching an unnervingly violent, sustained

intensity, accompanied throughout by a queasy swirl which sounds like the shinkling of a thousand devils.

Joukupa Black Eyes, recorded last year, is a more restrained, even intimate moment. The group is smaller and this is a much more documentary, matter of fact recording than the Bill Laswell-produced *Apocalypse Across The Sky* (Axiom) from 1992. Most of the tracks are flute- and drum-based, concentrating on very simple melodic and rhythmic formulae which seem capable of infinite repetition as the music expands inwardly into an acoustic world of ever smaller nuances and distinctions. "Brian Jones Joukupa Very Stoned" is one long acceleration, beautifully maintained.

On the face of it, *Joukupa* music seems straightforward enough, and there is little structurally to distinguish it from the legions of other African, Arabic and Asian folk music available on CD. But there is something else, impossible to define, a kind of persistent concentration and serene certainty that makes this music unusually gripping and occasionally alarming. It is not for nothing that people become obsessed with The Plaster Musicians and what they stand for — which is the belief that magic, and alchemy, is still alive and within our grasp. But there is no cathartic hysteria or shamanic madness on *Black Eyes*; instead there are surges, flows and collective leaps in tempo and dynamics which develop slowly out of the calm collective concentration of the players, becoming organisms as if by their own accord. Of course, this is a facet of all group music, but it is only rarely that music is stripped so bare and that its processes are revealed with such purity.

RICHARD SCOTT

Metalworks Parrot Soup

KEDA KEDC025 CD

In these culturally plural days, it's disappointing how few non-Indonesian gamelan groups recognise their own cultural identity in their work. Metalworks are one of the refreshing exceptions. They eschew 'authenticity' to create a hybrid reflecting the jazz, classical, folk and non-Western backgrounds of the musicians making up the gamelan. Dispensing with the usual tales of how

their gamelan was discovered buried in an accused Balinese temple at midnight, they declare that their set of instruments, incriminated as an unwanted set of vibes, were found hidden in a cupboard in Manchester.

Balinese music has traditionally plundered and been plundered by other sources, and Metalworks continue in the same vein: the cupboard-found gamelan is augmented by sheet metal cast offs and incorporates sax, Latin American percussion, tabla and the celestial vocals of Janet Sherbourne and Rachel Hewitt. Although the vocals are less inspiringly outlandish than on their first CD (which featured accordion, tenor sax, upright bass, drum machine and gamelan), the eclectic choice of material includes compositions based on English church bell change-ringing (by former Cornelius Cardew/Steve Reich cohort Michael Parsons, who also performs on this piece), pop music such as Barywange and the raghibulas of Sunda, Balinese-Javanese hybrids and a cover of a piece by eccentric Javanese composer Ki Nartosabdo, apparently the first person to write gamelan music in waltz time.

"Bis Malam" is outstanding: the musical approximation of a night bus ride from Java to Bali. "Luna" is equally engaging, a musical and lyrical palindrome which perfectly captures the sense of otherworldliness the gamelan can convey, while "Selodoran" combines an East Javanese tune with a neo-Egyptian soprano sax melody.

Less frenetic than the traditional Balinese gamelan (Javanese influences are to the fore), Metalworks have a dreamily melodic sound, due in part to the steel rather than brass gamelan instruments. Recommended.

MARTIN GORDON

Ryan Moore Twilight Circus In Dub Volume One

M RECORDS 001 CD

Jah Shaka Dub Salute Volume Four

SHAKA CD953 CD

The Rootsman In Dub We Trust

THIRD EYE MUSIC TEPHD 002 CD

Bassist Ryan Moore grew up playing in reggae groups in Toronto and

Vancouver, while at the same time pursuing an interest in improvising and the avant garde. He now lives in Holland, where he works with The Legendary Pink Dots. *Twilight Circus* is a homage to the 70s JA sound, but, of course, sounds nothing like the music of 20 years ago. However, like someone achieving proficiency in a second language, the style of expression has a charm of its own. It also gains from the fact that Moore can play the bass. In fact he plays nearly everything else on the record, which has some of the off-centre lo-fi sound of 70s UK dub. Limited resources are exploited. The retro aesthetic governs the presentation too: it's on vinyl only, packaged in cheap cardboard with paper labels stuck fore and aft. Sure sounds a mindless idea, but it foregrounds the intimidating burden of authority that dub carries, and the wit and proficiency of the execution make it an oddly entertaining record.

Ploughing his own furrow with iron certainty, Jah Shaka has amassed huge respect over the years for keeping the flame of dub burning through some lean times. His sacramental live shows induce euphoria in large audiences, most of whom care not a fig for the rasta schtick. This set was recorded at Leggo's Studios in Kingston, Jamaica with erstwhile King Tubby musicians The Firehouse Crew. Max Romeo is featured vocalist, drifting in and out of the mix. But electronics govern, and the most exciting thing about this repetitious album is the percussion programming. Otherwise the familiar prevails. It's the kind of thing that makes one feel that dub's gift is now used best by other, more elastic forms of music. The best track is a latinate ballad, otherwise there's nothing very much to hold your attention unless you've got your head shoved close up to a massive bass bin. Shaka's too good to produce anything that was mere dub by numbers, but this is hardly the sound of surprise.

Yorkshire-based Rootsman pushes dub into new spaces. Though a mastery of standard up-roots/dig/dub styles is evident there's also a willingness to throw plenty of other sounds into the mix. Elements of Jungle, Ambient, Arab music and House all jostle in, and the samples and track titles ("Dubbing The Maghreb", "Infidra", "Mekoud") open into areas way beyond the usual dub purview. In this context, elements such

ASC RECORDS



Ed Jones - Piper's Toles
featuring
Jonathon Gee
Wayne Batchelor
Brien Abrahams



Steve Waterman Quartet
Destination Unknown
featuring
Paul Cloris
Lionel Noble
Jeff Clyne



Steve Pilews Trio
Secret Spices
featuring
Jeff Clyne
Trevor Tomkins



The Fairclough Group
Shepherd Wheel
featuring
Christine Tobin
Paul Dunnell
Pete Saberton etc
SALES - NEW YORK: 6166 877 872
DISTRIBUTION - AUSTRALIA: 6166 877 872
FOR CATALOGUES AND NEW RELEASE INFO
ASC RECORDS: 1434 CHERRY RD
MACQUERIE CHESHIRE, 951-1 8PT
PHONE/FAX: 01426 423045

soundcheck

as the "Sésose-4" namechecks seem spurious dub paraphernalia. There's a light, poppy touch to some of the tunes, which is pleasant enough but makes one yearn for The Rootsman to push things further out.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Vidna Obmana The Transcending Quest

AMPLEXUS XUS02 CD

Robert Rich Night Sky Replies

AMPLEXUS XUS01 CD

Jorge Reyes Tonami

NO CD CD-NO10 CD

"In the Fourth World, nothing is simple" — David Toop, *The Wire* 1.26

One of the great difficulties in any discussion of the Fourth World is that of definition. What exactly is it? A world of modern/primitive hybridisation? Or a synthesis of futurism and roots tradition? Or just a convenient hook on which to hang any number of ethno-Ambient doodlings?

Vidna Obmana's *The Transcending Quest*, part of photographer Stefano Gemelli's Amplexus series of recordings, pictures the Fourth World as an interior environment. Obmana describes this mini-CD as "a mindtravel to an undefined world". This concept of a dream world accords with Jon Hassell's "Possible Musics", the term he coined to describe the music of the Fourth World. But there's something faintly New Age about the project, from the tasteful artwork to the sleeve notes' talk of fields and moods of imagination and fantasy. A dream world, maybe, but artifice is no substitute for substance.

Robert Rich's *Night Sky Replies*, another in the Amplexus series, is more recognisably 'of this world', particularly "Wheel Questions The Ground", which is highly reminiscent of Chinese Han music. While more substantial than Obmana's release, it is a highly derivative work, bringing to mind such obvious Fourth World citizens as Michael Brook and Eno. Most interesting of the four tracks here is "Night Spinning Inward", which has a cavernous quality reminiscent of Angelo Badalamenti's work. Not so much a hybrid, more a replicant.

Jorge Reyes seems to possess a greater



understanding of what beats at the heart of the Fourth World. Eschewing electronics, he constructs eight largely rhythm-based pieces from a wide range of exotic instruments, including rainsticks, clay flutes, mud whistles and various rooks and fossas. Strange, wild tales of ancient rituals, arcane and malevolent/benevolent gods permeate the album, conjuring a culture far removed from our own, and reminding us that this new world has its roots in the most primitive of traditions. (Super)naturally enough, the tales are drawn from pre-Hispanic culture — Reyes is Mexican — but they deal with universal issues: birth, sex, fertility, death. Fueled by these stories, Reyes's music invokes a primal response, as opposed to the cerebral pretensions of Obmana and Rich.

PETER MCINTYRE

Jocelyn Pook Deluge

O VERTIGO 1 CD

Originally conceived as music for the Montreal-based dance company O Vertigo, Jocelyn Pook's *Deluge* CD may prove a little difficult to get hold of, but perseverance is recommended. Pook, also a viola player, is one of a new generation of English composers whose works shows a healthy slant towards performance media. As a member (with Caroline Lavelle) of the Electra Strings quartet, Pook's session work has, in recent years, enhanced numerous projects, ranging from Derek Jarman soundtracks to Massive Attack and Nick Cave. However, it is with this solo project that she shows her mettle as a composer of imagination and ingenuity.

This is evident from both Pook's settings and orchestrations. Using voices with a relatively minimalist instrumentation — keyboards, violin, percussion and various sound effects — *Deluge* is characterised by a sepulchral, airy atmosphere. A luminous, startlingly traditional setting of the requiem text, alongside a theme taken from a Yemenite singer, links *Deluge*'s 11 tracks. Combined in its centre with two Messianic poems and a P. Jesu, *Deluge* is both a requiem for a post-nuclear world (why else the sample of Oppenheimer speaking?) and for the death of love itself.

For all this innovation, the classicism in Pook's chosen form and content is immediate. The three songs have implicitly Elizabethan models. On one

level, this is perhaps a musical response to a cinematic device. Jarman and, more recently, director Sally Potter have both used one Elizabethan age to explore another. Nevertheless, the pairing here is particularly effective and all the more interesting for its sheer range.

LOUISE GRAY

Ronald Shannon Jackson

What Spirit Say
DWR 895 CD

Ronald Shannon Jackson, he don't care he's always been ready to make music of daring ugliness. Sometimes this leads to music that has the kind of carefree, triumphant intelligence that makes one reassess one's prejudices, sometimes it's just plain uncomfortable. This mostly lumbering record is a long way away from the slink of 1982's *Mandance* or the avant-Orientalisms of 1985's Bill Laswell-produced *Decade Yourself*. It walks a feeble future-blues knife edge, teetering all too often into jazz rock overkill. But it has its moments. A bonus anywhere is young saxophonist James Carter, who makes a roaring contribution. That's the jazz bit, but not so good is the rock bit, courtesy of Jeff Lee Johnson's guitar. The nadir is reached on "Aged Pain", a ballad which gives some idea of the how rheumatoid arthritis might sound.

Leaving aside the Iberian raft of "A Night In Seville", there's great stuff such as "Serenade For Musicians", with its truly perfect mix of Africanisms and all-out jazz, and "Front Seat Frisco", a duet between Carter and Jackson which draws out the energetic best in both. A version of "Now's The Time" is just plain odd. But there's too much juddering, fiddly, overwritten rock about the place. Not much of an addition to Shannon's impressive catalogue — the wrong kind of ugly.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Somo Somo Hello Hello

STERNS STCD 1065 CD

Zaiko Langa Langa Avis De Recherche

STERNS STCD 1068 CD

Somo Somo's great rumba guitarist Mose Fan Fan graduated from Zairean legend Franco's OK Jazz and has spent

the 20 odd years since then traveling the globe forming different versions of *Somo Somo* wherever he found himself, including a notable spell in London in the 1980s, remembered by many with great affection. *Helelo Helelo* finds him reunited with old Zaneen friends, though the energy and spontaneity which inform every second of the music here quickly put to rest any thoughts of back-patting nostalgia. The playing is sparkling, imbued with a genuine spirit of enthusiasm and collective creative invention. The drums and percussion of Kambe Mathwaia and Kalinda Mukala are particularly inspired: they're on top of everything and sound as if they were playing in a sweaty dance club in Kinshasa rather than a London recording studio.

Much of the above could once be said of Zako Langa Langa's records, which pioneered the new soulful style in the 70s. *Avs De Recherche*, by one of a legion of ZLL offshoots, is a pale reflection of those glory days, full of bog standard guitar jangling and dull and unmaginative drum and keyboard programming. Some nice singing from Nyoka Longo et al sinks hopelessly in the mire.

RICHARD SCOTT

Yma Sumac Voice Of The Xtabay And Other Exotic Delights

REV-DLA/CREATION CREV034 CD

Robert Mitcham Calypso — Is Like So...

REV-DLA/CREATION CREV037 CD

Martin Denny The Exotic Sounds Of Martin Denny

REV-DLA/CREATION CREV039 CD

To the victors go the spoils: not only did the Axis Powers fail to Yankee military might in World War Two, but during America's post-war economic miracle their cultures descended to the power of the dollar. Leisure became just as powerful a weapon as the Sherman tank. With a totalistic view of ethnicity that bordered on the parodic, Exotica grew out of a psychic need to make the Foreign (particularly Asian cultures) harmless and funny after the War. The kitsch produced by the tension between 'the exotic' and the relentless

standardisation of 1950s America is currently being plundered by the Creation Records subsidiary Rev-Ola to fuel the Easy Listening boom.

Yma Sumac's fusion of other-worldly vocal dynamics and 50s melodrama is the perfect embodiment of this tension. Sumac is a Peruvian singer, with a voice that would make Sainkho Namchylak jealous. On "Chuncho" and "Kon Tia", it becomes indistinguishable from a screeching violin or someone whistling. She usually displays the full range of her five octave voice in every song — moving from husky growls to high pitch operatics within a few bars. Singing over cool-Latin pieces and Harry James-style big band arrangements, her music redelivers camp she sounds like Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald singing together in the shower.

After the War, America was invaded by a series of dance crazes from the Caribbean and South America. Like the mambo and bossa nova before and after it, the calypso craze was championed by well-meaning urban sophisticates who camouflaged the tell-tale signs of exotica. In Robert Mitcham's hands, however, classics of political double entendre like Mighty Sparrow's "Jean And Dinah" and Roaming Lion's remarkable "Tick Tick Tick" became the ultimate in kitsch. It's impossible to keep a straight face when, ten years after his famous 'booze, brawls and broads' bust, the epitome of the Hollywood tough guy sings "Man Smart, Woman Smarter" (titled "Not Me" on *Calypso*). He turns Sir Lancelot's "Mistrala Plaisir" into rock 'n' roll, he sings in an awful fake Trinidadian patois and the group sicks, but *Calypso* is very funny, especially the original cover art.

Exotica was pretty much invented by one man, Martin Denny. It's the story about his chance discovery (playing an outdoor concert accompanied by the unintentional croaking of a frog) is true, it is one of those fortuitous coincidences that litter the history of popular music. His early hits, like the eternal "Quiet Village" and "Stone Garden", are characterised by Richard Clayderman/Anthony Newley cocktail piano surrounded by bird calls, tinkling triangles and Latin percussion. Later on, his vision became more bizarre — a pan-Asian translation of the Ellingtonian tone poem. As the world's diversity becomes encoded into the etherial

dualisms of binary, Denny's charming naivety is less patronising and more enjoyable than even the most glittering of WOMAD's pabulum.

PETER SHAPIRO

The Sunken Road Weg 1-7

Y-TIFAX 3 CD

Kooler Kooler

FAX PK 08109 CD

Koolfang Jambient

FAX PK 08109 CD

62 Eulengasse

FAX PW21 CD

The hyperproductivity of Peter Namlook's Fax label has spawned a good deal of co-Benjaminite theorising about disposable and instant art. Electronics as Gebrauchsmusik and so on: Namlook's home-made, unadorned Ambient moodscape (more microminimalist than minimal) have prompted plenty of speculation that this is the ultimate in DIY music, aural superfluity that anyone can produce given the tools and a working power point.

Sorry, but judging by this batch of Namlook releases, that's a misnomer. Namlook's music is simplistic, but there's enough happening on these discs to suggest that he is a lot more than just another sample-and-hold technician, and subscribes more to the subjective, illustrative value of the classical music of the past rather than consecrating his own much-touted 'classical music of the future'.

There's little in the way of linear development or compositional architecture, but the tracks (between four and 51 minutes in length) on all these records evolve continually and recognisably within themselves. *Weg 1-7* is maybe an exception, with Juergen Rehberg's piano and Lucas Hensler's flute combining in syntropic sequential patterns to create hypnotic and marantic music. *62 Eulengasse* is pretty eventful also — but it's a behemoth of an album, containing two fascinating collaborations with Tetsu Inoue that counterpose Western environmental Ambient with Tokyo dystopian Ambient. While the

shifting tones of the material retain a random, aleatory feel, the level of compositional invention attests heights that cast doubt on the theory that Namlook can just churn this stuff out without thinking.

Naturally there are vast inconsistencies of quality — music of this nature will by its very definition produce longeurs for most listeners at some point. There are also suggestions of derangement — the shrill looping saxophone trills of "Urban Alienation" from *Kooler* are lifted from Namlook's revered Jan Garbarek and the background textures from another hero, Eberhard Weber. Additionally, "Pietro", with its delay systems and Echoplexed sax, sounds like John Klemmer in misanthropic middle age. It doesn't, however, diminish the music any — but rather serves to reinforce the question as to why, until about 18 months or so ago, was this sort of music deplored by critics as self-indulgent New Age drivelling?

PAUL STUIMP

Towa Tei Future Listening

ELEKTRA 7559 61761 CD

Friends Of Dean Martinez The Shadow Of Your Smile

SUB POP PDP306 CD

Jimi Tenor Europa

SAHRD P012 CD

I used to have a tape by the Mexican Easy Listening maestro Esquivel. I think it was called *Other Sounds*, and I erased it just before the recent resurgence of interest in 60s mood music, which just shows how on the ball I am in the music fashion department. These three new albums are all inspired by classic Easy Listening, but can they match the low standards set by that most heartily despised of genres?

What? Esquivel, Martin Denny, Mantovani and the others were really expressing was the sound of money. The brash confidence of the music, the show-off grand piano, the big orchestra, the expensive production — they're all saying one thing: we had a lot of money to make this music, why don't you share in our affluence? The music compliments you on your income, your car and your neat decor skills.

soundcheck

Towa Tei knows that the 90s version of expensive sound has to be tongue in cheek. He's got tinkling Rhodes piano, smooth sax, Latin guitar, electric star, those Latin rub-a-dick percussion things, even a real grand piano, all mixed in with samples of old brass and reed sections. His trumpet card is his drop dead, relaxed dance beats, as you might expect from an ex-member of Deee-Lite. This is a big production, with guests dropping in from Japanese kitschmasters Yellow Magic Orchestra and Pizzicato Five. Bebel Gilberto contributes Latin vocals and duets delicately with Arto Lindsay on the pretty "Obengido." A typically seductive track is "Meditation" which makes meditating sound like a good career move, a kind of spiritual networking opportunity to meet the gods. This is a clever album, which made me feel my enjoyment of it demonstrated my excellent taste.

The Friends Of Dean Martinez also have their tongues in the right place, but this is a real guitar band playing live in an Arizona studio. Sounding like The Del Fuegos on their day off, The Friends are actually three members of Giant Sand plus Naked Prey's rhythm section. Leader Bill Elm deep-twangs his way through a highly melodic selection of instrumentals, including standards like "Hasty" and the wonderful "Swamp Cooler." No artiness here: the group is recorded in a sincere, straightforward manner. Yesser, that's a real vibraphone, and a pair of real violins on the title track. This is Easy Listening for regular guys and girls who like an electric guitar to daydream a little.

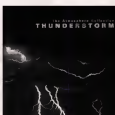
I guess I didn't hit it off with Jimi Tenor, he's just not glamorous enough. This Finnish sleaze-fest is a no-budget marriage of minimalist Techno with cocktail jazz melodies. Weird idea, but the sound is and the drums rigid. The people who made this very un-rich music clearly don't have a lot of money, maybe they don't even like money that much. And when Jimi starts singing along with his synth d/ko George Benson, I have to leave the party.

CLIVE BELL

Thunderstorm Thunderstorm

RRK0019C R50295 CD

Well, if I am rating this as an act of God, it's got to get a solid ten. Definitely not



the work of an underachiever.

In most people's minds, environmental recordings occupy the same niche as self-adhesive Everglades wallpaper, from which power points and light switches float inconspicuously a supremely campish New Age attempt to transmute the urban banal into an Elysian idyll, people sitting in horse-drawn rooms while quadrophonic surf crashes around them and rainforest bird life studs the gloom with a thousand awan eyes. It's no surprise, then, to discover items from Ryko's excellent series of "Atmospheres" recordings secreted coily at the back of many discerning collections. I confess to finding these discs irresistible, and this one is particularly good. Even forgetting the performance for a while, the recording quality is remarkable. One 60 minute storm recorded so perfectly that you could count the individual raindrops, the whole symphonic depth of a full-bit storm captured for your pleasure. The recording acts as a trigger and the full memory of this familiar and affecting natural phenomenon does the rest.

The sleeve notes detail relevant meteorological facts as well as a personal account of the recording circumstances. The weather is a fundamental influence on states of mind, and the associative triggers which operate while listening to this are surprising in their vividness. You really start to smell rain and to get that sense of aural scale which characterises the experience of a big storm. *Thunderstorm* puts a lot of electroacoustic sound design to shame. The disc also contains 23 individual indexed thunder strikes which, while interesting from an archival point of view, seem a little superfluous as the drama of the full storm.

PAUL SCHITZE

Ed Tomney
Safe: Original Soundtrack
I0NC 14 CD

Variors Artists
Lord Of Illusions: Original Soundtrack
I0NC 13 CD

Using music as a narrative force additional to theatrical or cinematic action is not a new idea, although it is safe to say that in recent decades the development of soundtrack as an

integral element has assumed a central importance. Two albums released on Mute's soundtrack label bear testament to this. Written for Todd (Superstar) Haynes's *Safe* and Clive (Heibauer) Barker's *Lord Of Illusions* respectively, Ed Tomney and (as the central compositional presence on the latter film) Simon Boswell provide music that has significance beyond the mere population of the plots.

Using an array of synthetic effects with some input from one of his previous outfits, The Industrial Orchestra, Tomney uses broad colours, deliberately dried by an analogue production, to create a statuesque and elemental soundscape. As a film about disease — in particular, the environmental allergies suffered by main protagonist and LA housewife Carol White — Tomney has used the idea of the insidious progress of such illnesses to underpin a subtle series of motifs. Tomney, an experienced theatre composer who counts director David Lynch among his collaborators, does this in a conventional way, presenting themes which slowly reveal themselves, that suggest relationships between stages in the action. He does this subtly, not least because there is often little to anchor the music. To a great extent, rhythm is dispensed with in favour of a floating swell of electronics, which at times sounds like a project that Tangerine Dream and 1977-era Eno might have made.

Safe is divided into four acts, which may make sense for the film, but on record is slightly baffling. Is there a qualitative or thematic difference between the acts? It's difficult to say, because there is much about *Safe*'s music that is purposefully slippery. The music is designed to mirror the confusion of the film's characters: the penultimate act, "Lost In Wrenwood", has drips of percussion lighting for attention beneath sweeps of keyboard sounds. It is a discontinuous surface, which with timely analysis and recourse to the film (scheduled for a 1996 UK release) would reveal rewarding and intriguing links.

The discontinuity that appears in *Safe* has bearings on Boswell's music, and by extension, much soundtrack music. Because film music is so often episodic, continual development can actually be a hindrance. With a score so highly orchestrated as Boswell's music for

Restless: through Vital

Rev-Ola: through Pinnacle

Rogue Trooper: through SRD

RTE: through Koch

R&S: through Vital

Rykodisc: through Vital

Sähkö: through Plastic Head

Barker's latest horror flick, momentum and tension is exercised in short, dynamic bursts. His 65-piece orchestra sweep through a range of sombre chromatics that evoke both Pendergast and Herrmann. There are out-takes of sorts, notably a version of Perry Como's "Magic Moments" by Erasure, cranky blues from Joshua White, Latin moments from Brave Combo, and a reprise of "Dancing In The Dark" by Diamanda Galas. This is a supremely confident score from a British composer who is making his imprimatur felt in Hollywood. Boswell is adept in manipulating genre music with genuinely experimental notions. It is to be hoped that a more continuous work is not far off.

LOUISE GRAY

Ultramarine

Bel Air
BLANCO Y NEGRO 0630 11206 CD/MC

Ultramarine are dependable types. They remind one of those actors for whom a new role means not a whole new character, but projecting the same old persona on to the same brand new scenery. They are, if you like, Bob Hoskins of Techno.

From the jazzy ambience of *Every Man And Woman Is A Star* to the Canterbury Scene flirtations of *United Kingdoms*, it's not that Ultramarine records are indistinguishable, or even predictable, just that they're always recognisable. And so it is with *Bel Air*. Their keyboard squelches have that same glutinous languor, a kind of semi-bovine dreaminess that seems both curiously comic and strangely tragic. Elsewhere, though, there have been changes.

Gone is *United Kingdoms*'s rural folkyness, traded in for a blend of cryptic playfulness and urban sophistication. Without ever reaching the quirkiness of, say, *Wagon Christ*, *Bel Air* presents a loose-knit collection of genre fragments, almost every so slightly out of kilter with each other and adrift in a sea of mellow jazz fusions, out with kumps of funk and Spanish guitar.

Most unsettling is the addition of Pocka to the line-up. Unlike so many guest vocalists, Sharon Lewis and Natasha Jones really engage with their material, forcing us to reappreciate what we thought were settled sounds as they soar in and out of harmony. Then there are the hints of a Junglist soul arching over the beats. "78" calls to mind the

work of Bedouin Ascend, letting the rhythms trip and collide while the melody subtly sways, though generally the effect is of an ever-present shadow. Ultramarine's *Bel Air* might boast some smooth surfaces, but beneath lurks something rather scary. Maybe with the next LP they'll let it out to play.

SUSAN MASTERS

Various Artists
Grooverider's Hardstep
Selection Volume Two
KOCN 24 CD/MC/LP

Various Artists
Hardcore Massive One
ROGUE TROOPER 014 CD/MC/LP

Various Artists
Happy Hardcore Fever
ROGUE TROOPER 016 CD/MC/LP

The primacy of rhythm in drum 'n' bass is born of the same impulse that spawned the bit-map abstractions of Electronica — the desire to strip music to its skeleton. Drum 'n' bass lays bare the sutures and synaptic gaps that make music work by making rhythm both the form and the function. While this strategy has sometimes created organisms by forging a soothing melody out of hi-hats and snares, the memorable tracks on both *Hardstep Selection* and *Hardcore Massive* are the result of an overload of sound and fury.

On *Hardstep*, ragga chat, diva wails and melodics all creep in and out of Grooverider's mix, but it's the drums that make you sit up and take notice. They are ludicrously high in the mix, snarling with fuck-off attitude and macho bravado. Dillinger's "Angels Fell" and Jamajcs' "Your Sound" provide some relief, but *Hardstep Selection* is generally pretty fearsome. Tom & Jerry's "All Of My" bristles with the tension of taut, clipped beats, elsewhere, the scatter-shot dynamics of ornery synth patterns undermine samples of lower's rock crooning with power surges of adrenalin and searing menace.

Similarly, the high points of *Hardcore Massive* eschew the porous viscosity of Ascend & Ultramarine's "Just A Little" or the one-dimensionality of "Smoker's Rhythm" by DJ SS in favour of a fierce theatricality. The chopped-up breaks of Aphrodite's remarkable "Besslight" sound like a drunk hurling a violent

invective of drum shards, an effect mirrored by the rema of Droppin' Science's "Dropper: Science Pt 1" with its roughneck snarls hurtling by at escape velocity. On "Knowledge And Wisdom", DJ Phantasy rewrites rhythm's usual circuitry with a choked bass line that works against the predominant pulse of the track.

Where drum 'n' bass peels away layers of sound to get at the inner workings of music, Happy Hardcore rationalises music down to a smooth, efficient surface. With more gratuitous tempo changes than a Def Leopard anthem and more shameless hooks than Sly Stone's "Dance To The Music", the nitrous rush of Happycore is pure pop polished to its essence: speed, catch phrases, gloss and a galvanising riff. On the evidence of *Happy Hardcore Fever*, DJ Vibes & Wishdoka are the Stock, Aiken & Waterman of Hardcore. With the famous Madonna sample ("Life is a mystery/Everyone must stand alone/I hear you call my name and it feels like Ecstasy"), "Rave Is A Mystery" is the sound of a shiny, young Britain. Just as with Kylie, though, there is a dark undercurrent — the relentless rush towards pleasure and release is a curse with no antidote.

PETER SHAPIRO

Various Artists
Telepathy: Jungle Dons — Dub Plate Special

BREAKDOWN RECORDS BORDCOOB CD/LP

The art of drum 'n' bass is currently in such ferment that attempting to characterise it in terms of a simplistic "Hardstep" versus "Intelligent" opposition does little justice to the subtlety, precision and originality of the best of this music. Such a mass of material is presently flooding the market that any attempt to reduce it to some kind of order is fraught with danger and difficulty.

Having already compiled *Drum 'N' Bass Selection Volumes 1-4*, Breakdown Records, a subsidiary of Suburban Base, are in a unique position to provide some kind of vantage point. Unlike most Jungle compilations, *Telepathy* contains only previously unreleased cuts, no remixes, and seems to have been conceived as an album rather than a sampler. It is impressive how the different styles and temperaments

represented actually combine and support each other, creating more than a random selection of tunes. Hyper's "Doomed To Fail" supports an eerie unresolved ambience, largely created by a single manna chord, if it doesn't really go anywhere, it's because it doesn't bother trying (what do you want, two chords?).

My own predilection is for the harder styles such as that of Marvellous Cain, whose elegantly ferocious "Killer" combines panic-ridden air raid sirens with a bass line lifted, suit warm, from Mongo Santamania. Grooverider's "Next Of Kin" and Devous D's "Number One Sound" both go for a Star Wars dub vortex overload, tripping over themselves with a plethora of sounds and forces which somehow maintain astonishing structure and momentum. The centrepieces are Roni Size's "Cool Calm And Collected" and DJ SS's "Necness". SS uses by now conventional soulful chords to introduce dancehall bass, racing percussion and rapping, creating the most trendy drum 'n' bass tour de force I've heard. Size slips sampled orchestral strings and harp arpeggios onto an almost minimalist parade ground snare drum pattern and Latin bass, superbly structured and effortlessly virtuosic. Both Size and SS combine sweeter, brighter optimistic sounds with the more brittle, brutal science of Hardstep.

RICHARD SCOTT

in brief electronics

Rob Young surges through the electronics maze circuitry

Autotech Anvil Vapre EP WARP
PROMO CD/LP Flamingthrowers and paint-blistering bass drums herald the return of Sean Booth and Rob Brown. This new material is no less forbidding than before, but sounds driven by a prickly heat instead of the most closeness that's puffed up many of their contemporaries. Still way, way out there.

Contestacion Capilar Orleon
Gagarin HYADES ARTS HYCDD 1 CD
Unclashable 26 track assemblage from Spain's Miguel Ruiz. Veering violently from electroacoustic scratching to cool, glitched TripHop augmented with

soundcheck

fretless bass and keyboards, *Rux* tosses in a few Burroughs samples for good measure — though the rest of the album speaks more than WSB can about the power of the cut-up. Jack into Rux's experiments with stereo distortion and prepare to have your brainstem rearranged

Doctor Rockit Ready To Rockit

CLEAR CLR 411 2X12 The gimmick favoured by Matthew Herbert aka *Wah Mountain* aka *Doctor Rockit* is simple: 'non-musical' instruments — cameras, pebbles, staplers, gym shoes — are recorded, distorted and played through a sampler. Previously, as on *Warp's Theory Of Evolution* completion, this has meant little more than collaging found TV soundbites, but for *Clear* he has taken these weird popping, crunching textures with the merest hint of keyboards and the occasional breakpoint. The results are excellent — like hyper-amplified recordings of worms chewing, these probing pieces destabilise the familiar.

EVA Extra Vehicular Activity

KICK 26 CD One of several recent concept CDs that attempt to enact a space mission, and as such it's been sucked into selecting the most obvious and overused metaphor. Richard James, Luke Vibert and Mouse On Mars, to name three, have all demonstrated fascinating ways to abandon the body without recourse to NASA mythology. There are good bits dotted around like so much cosmic litter, but the guiding imagery means there's too much space in between.

Freeform Elastic Speakers

WORM INTERFACE WID CD All over the place — in the best possible sense. Simon Pyke is exploring ways of unlocking synthesised music from its accepted matrices, and occasionally this sounds like a security guard's first drum lesson. There's audible glee at ignoring technoid conventions all over *Elastic Speakers*, compounded by some often head-chewing rhythms that twist into heavy sub-dub grooves just as you're about to give up on it. Keep it coming.

Fuzzy Logic Gray Or Green

NUMBERS ELECTROBEAT EBD2 CD **Toys For The Revolution...**
Beyond The Horizon ELECTROBEAT



Shock: 56 Beresford Road, London E4 6EF

Skin Graft: through Southern

Soul Note: through Harmonia Mundi

Sterns: through Sterns

Sub Pop: through RTM/DISC

Sub Rosa: through Cargo, These

EBD17 CD Urban Select White

SPACES ELECTROBEAT EBD23 CD Multiton dressed as... something even harder to chew on Miami's Electrobeat label are asking the right questions — 'Is there any part of nature which has yet to be quantized?' — but aren't coming up with satisfactory answers. The Cage associations claimed by Fuzzy Logic seem rather far-fetched for a record that's so linear and equipment-centric. Naïf drum machines and graceless rhythms don't help either. *TFTR* bring an alternate take on Jack's call for the children of the world to unite: their trifes and sleeve imagery call for kids to be armed to meet the struggle head on. Unfortunately, the music — Devo meets Detroit, with imitating synth-trumpet fanfares — severely weakens the argument. *Urban Select* attempt to portray a trio of characters within a city space gives birth to the most engaging music of the three, with apparent switches between live instrumentation (including Spanish guitar) and more cheap synths, but it too is derailed by lumpy rhythms and only derivative sounds. Mercifully free of US Ambient's Goo fixations, but still with some catching up to do.

Higher Intelligence Agency

Freefooter BEYOND ROAD 13 CD Hermetic it may be, but *Freefooter* is superb. The Birmingham duo have evidently spent the last 12 months with their heads jacked deep into their machines, gaining complete empathy with the gear. Chattering rhythm boxes are swathed in modal, dubby synths, what's lacking in darkness and danger is compensated for in wit, intelligence and slink. All action remains patterned on the surface, so there's little more to say, except that it's a deeply satisfying listen.

Jo Don't Eat The Yellow Snow EP

CHEAP 12CHEAP 12 2X12 12

Clairalibred! MONAX EXCURSIONS

MAVERICK 12 One of few musicians who can make 4/4 rhythms interesting, Austrian Patrick Pulsinger makes his jackhammer riffs achingly funny. "Eternal Sun" has the texture of some fibre sticking unpleasantly to your lungs. For "Clair", licensed to James Lovell's new *Excursions* imprint, Pulsinger bubbles the beats through muffled ambience, decking it with Sextant-style Rhodes lumps, but losing the plot on

"Libre" — though it's saved by Andrea Parker's lipside mix.

Locust Truth Is Born Of Arguments

R&S/APOLLO AMB 549D CD Hardly the parasite the name suggests, Mark Van Hoen's progress this year has appeared wilfully disobedient. First *Aurabonds*, his impenetrable LP of sludge-drones with Seefeel's Daren Seymour, now a full length album that's packaged like a piece of 80s ABC/CTY cynical glamour. Inside, past those so-precious titles ("I Believe In A Love I May Never Know", "The Love You Cruelly Gave Me Would Not Last"), lurk fashionable distorto-beats that shatter on impact, heavy stereo FX, glitched loops, snarling sonories. There's something faintly curmudgeonly about the whole affair which I find myself admiring, but towards the end searing trumpet and warm chimes lift the mood. *Still*, it's easy to hear why Van Hoen has made so many enemies.

Radial Blend ENOUGH ROAD

SUBURBS OF HELL, SOH 02 1 CD The latest offering from Douglas Benford's semi-detached stable is a 45 minute continuous track that skirts lightly from section to section. While never unhampered from the sequencer grid, it can be viewed as a 45 minute incident, an improvisation around a large library of prepared riffs and textures. Like almost everything that's appeared on this import to date, it's characterful, colourful and poignant through the presets: more frank than blank.

Steel Steel MILLE PLATEAUX MPCD 16

CD Sheer extremity from the label that's co-opted Deleuze and Guattari as in-house polemicists, *Steel* is 72 undereased minutes of painful Electro-thrash — unfilmed, untamed, unwashed. I'd call it refreshing if it wasn't such a relentless slew of industrial smokeleech: certainly a wake-up call to dopey Ambient drones with barely two samples to rub together. Handle with caution.

Various Artists Boredom Is Deep

And Mysterious Vortex Two APRIL RECORDS APR007 CD The blanchance stereo and tupperry Adobe graphics — let alone artist aliases like *Double Muffled Dolphin*, *Opiste* and *James Bong* — prepare you for the worst. And by and large, the worst is what you get on this 11 track collection of Danish ambient. With

Futuristic funkadelia

Receive one year's worth of **Wires** plus a P-Funk bonanza for just £25



Funkcronomicon

Bill Laswell's latest all-star studio conlab pulls P-Funk screaming into the new millennium. Drawing on artists as diverse as George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, Sly Stone, Garry Shider, Maceo Parker, Bernie Worrell, Sly & Robbie, The Last Poets, Bucklehead, Eddie Hazel, Herbie Hancock, Anton Fier, Robert Musso, Nicky Skopelitis and more, this two CD set documents a mind-bending belemoth jam session. FREE with your new subscription to *The Wire*

The Wire. Decode yourself, don't barcode yourself.

FEATURING:

George Clinton
Bill Laswell
Bootsy Collins
Sly Stone
Herbie Hancock
Maceo Parker
Eddie Hazel
Bernie Worrell
Bucklehead
Sly & Robbie
Nicky Skopelitis
Anton Fier
Bobby Byrd
Robert Musso
Blackbyrd McKnight
Umar Bin Hassan
Ayib Diong

subscribe

ORDER FORM

UK £25.00 • USA \$50.00 • EUROPE (Airmail) £32.00 • Other: Surface £30.00 • Air £45.00

Please send my **FUNKRONOMICON** CD
(while stocks last) and subscription to:

☐ I enclose my cheque/money order made payable to WIRE for £

Name

☐ Please charge my: Access/Mastercard ☐
Amex ☐ Barclaycard/Visa ☐ Switch ☐

Address

Card No.

Postcode

Country

Expiry date / Issue No. (Switch only)

(please supply cardholder's name and address if different from opposite)

Telephone

Signature

Date / /

Return to: The Wire Magazine, FREEPOST, 45-46 Poland St, London W1E 5EL, or fill in postcard insert and mark it 'Funkronomicon'. (NB: your CD will arrive separately, after your first issue.) This is a limited offer, available while stocks last

No stamp needed if mailed within the UK. Payment by UK Sterling cheque, international money order, Eurocheque or US dollar cheque

THE WIRE
adventures in modern music

Or call our Subscription Hotline on 0171 734 3555

soundcheck

the honourable exception of Dub Tractor, this music makes you think of Scandinavian furnishing catalogues, overheated apartments, saunas and healthcare programs. Empty, eventless candyfloss for a culture in terminal decline

in brief out rock

Tom Ridge pondera several guitars=noise equations

Bardo Pond Bufo Alvarus, Amen 29:15 CHE 33 CD Fun with guitars from the label that gave us Magic Hour Bufo Alvarus is the Latin name of the toad you can lick and get a trip from its toxic skin secretions (should the urge take you), but what we get here is more bludgeoning than hallucinatory, and a darker beast altogether than the amier Magic Hour. Vocals are reduced to a distant drone, the guitars simmer and buzz, and Joe Culver's extraordinary freestyle drumming powers the whole thing along. The 29 minute long "Amerf" nods in an Ambient direction with its drames and ghostly, programmed voices, but the group can't resist the urge to play on some dirty fuzz guitar which more or less incoherates the more subtle elements

The Ex Mudbird Shivers REC DECEX 68:00 CD Mind numbingly awful set of brittle 'art' punk/funk from this Dutch group. The anarcho agit-prop of Mudbird Shivers sounds so inward looking and hermetically sealed in its own self-consciously avant garde universe that it travels rapidly in one direction only up its own arse. And name-dropping Dadaism in the sleeve notes isn't going to make it any better. This is The Ex's 14th album apparently — the mind boggles.

Harmony Rockets Paralyzed Mind Of The Archangel Void BIG CAT ABB 50 CDLP Paralyzed Mind is a single, lengthy piece, performed in one live take, recorded on an ancient analogue cassette recorder. What emerges is impressive: an extraordinary collision between lo-fi and free jazz improvisation. The music moves seamlessly from Ambient drone through avant rock and minimalism to free jazz sizzling and back. The rhythmic backing shifts ground constantly, often almost imperceptibly, while the guitar, trumpet



and saxophone suddenly fly off into new themes and phrases. The momentum of the piece is sustained throughout its length, overcoming, then capitalising on, the limitations of the PA system and the recording equipment. This sounds effortlessly out on a limb and genuinely thrilling to listen to

Palace Music Viva Last Blues

DOMINO WG 21 CD/CLP Another invitation to the world of Palace, or more specifically, Will Oldham. Viva Last Blues is about as underground as Country and folk-tinged rock gets. It also doesn't generally sound too happy: the bluesy lament of "It's I Who Have Left Them" is worthy of Richard Thompson at his gloomiest. However, there is a pleasing obliqueness in the lyrics and Oldham's delivery of them which saves the grimmer moments of Viva Last Blues from falling into a pit of maudlin reflectiveness. There's some fairly rousing stuff here as well. "Work Hard Play Hard" is full-on Country rock in the Crazy Horse mode, and "Carl's Blues" sees Oldham and cohorts giving it some electric boogie

Fram Sargasso Sea TOD PURE PURE

64 CDLP An interesting selection of contrasting themes brought together in a mildly intoxicating mix, part mutated cocktail jazz and part murky experimentation with fairly primitive keyboards and programmed sounds. The lyrics are pretty dark — "Leave your little scars my dear/With your sharp words sculpture my heart" — but are delivered with a strange, almost expressionless otherworldliness (think of Nico's Chelsea Girl album). The music similarly manages to convey a kind of mid-60s mystery soundtrack feel, with horns and vibraphone prominent on several tracks, while not giving itself over to the drama of, say, Portishead. So although there's much to admire in the originality of the sound and arrangements, it gives the impression of being not so much blue as slightly off-colour

Quitters Club Quitters Club

INDIC 004 CD More fun with guitars, this time of the very loud variety. Actually it's not much fun at all, being a concussive take on barely deconstructed hardcore. There isn't a track listing, so although I can tell you that there's a Michael Gra/Swans song in here somewhere, I don't know which particular sheet metal

assault to attribute it to. This music seems constantly poised to fall apart but manages to stay together by brute force and lunging guitar riffs, pounding drums and lots of shouting. The tempos lurch about all over the place before being buried under an avalanche of noise. Quitters Club funnily evades much more than rudimentary decoding. You can be impressed by the demolition of a high rise: you'll be all right providing you don't stand too close

Red Krayola Amor And Language

DRAG CITY DC 53 CDLP Red Krayola are a shifting collective of musicians, led by Mayo Thompson, whose stock in trade (here at least) is whimsical, psychedelic pastiche with an air of determined amateurism well to the fore. Arch weirdness appears to be the ground rule, infusing each track with a half-hearted, limp quality, and it starts to wear thin very early on. Despite a nice line in keyboard reverberation with added sonic crackles, the music meanders, often degenerating into pointless doodling with colourless, flat vocals

Run On On/Off MATADOR DLE 143

CD A 'supergroup' of sorts, formed out of a variety of fairly obscure New York groups, with a sound that can be traced right back to CBGBs in the 70s. There are plenty of scratchy, urgent sounding guitars, noisy organ runs and a relentless rhythm section. The best thing about On/Off, though, is Sue Garner's voice, from Country-sweet to brittle, hard urgency. The pacy "Into The Attic" and "Water" have a frayed, frantic quality, contrasting with the slow smouldering "Pretty Note". There are a couple of instrumentals which aren't bad in an angular, retro New Wave sort of way, but they're easily eclipsed by the vocal tracks. An intriguing, all too brief debut.

Six Finger Satellite Severe

EXPOSURE SUB PDP SP 299 CDLP With their earlier 1995 release Machine Gunner, Six Finger Satellite left the guitars at home and produced an uninspired EP of join-the-dots Electronica. Fortunately, the guitars are back for Severe Exposure, inspiring a sort of Mudhoney/Industrial hybrid. This is fast and furious stuff: high speed guitars, screaming synths and distorted, squealing vocals. "Bad Comrade" and "Parlour Games" sound the most punked-up, "Pulling A Train"

Suburbs Of Hell: through Kudos/Pinnacle

Too Pure: through Vital

Tzadik: 61 East Eighth Street, Suite 126, New York, New York 10003, USA

Union Mill: through Cargo

Warp: through RTM

Worm Interface: 4 Berwick Street, London W1

new notes at a glance information from SPNM

SPNM Steel Pan Project

at the Huddersfield
Festival of
Contemporary
Music on 20 Nov

Following the
successful SPNM /
South Bank Steel Pan
workshop on 20 May,
composers have been
invited to write new
works for up to 5 pans
for possible
performance in a
workshop and concert
at the Huddersfield
Festival.

The event will feature
SPNM Artistic Director
Javier Alvarez,
composer Brian Elias,
ace percussionist
Simon Limbrick, steel
pan expert Rachel
Hayward, and three
other top pan
performers. The closing
date for sending us
your scores is 5
September, so it may
be too late for you
to have a go... Ring us
for more details.

Want to know more
about Steel Pan?
Then Rachel
Hayward's book 'The
Steelpan Handbook' is
a must, containing
detailed descriptions of
the different
instruments.
Available from SPNM
priced £6.50. Send a
cheque payable to
SPNM, quote 'Wire
Offer' and we'll send
you your copy.

SPNM
Francis House
Francis Street
London SW1P 1DE

1,6,8

Broomhill presents The
Juniper Tree Toohey***
Broomhill, David Solomon
Estes, Southborough, Tinkbridge
Webb, Kent TNS 01892 517720

2

English Northern
Philharmonic New
Composers' Forum
Glover*** Reem*** JBT Koh***
Sallis*** Long*** Danchary
Town Hall, Dewsbury, W Yorks
01924 465151

4

BBC Proms 95: BBC
Symphony Orchestra
Debussy, Edvös*, Bartók,
Harvey *Royal Festival Hall,*
Kensington Gore, London SW7
0171-589 8212

7

BBC Proms 95:
BBC Singers,
Ensemble Modern
Antheil, Reich*** Stravinsky
Royal Festival Hall, Kensington
Gore, London SW7
0171-589 8212

8

BBC Proms 95: BBC
National Orchestra of
Wales Maw, Beethoven
Royal Festival Hall, Kensington
Gore, London SW7
0171-589 8212

9

BBC Proms 95:
Education Event various
Imperial College Union Concert
Hall, Brunner Road, London
SW7 0171-589 8212

11

BBC Proms 95: James
Wood, The Hilliard
Ensemble etc. Busoni,
Machaut, Xenakis, Tard,
Wood*** Massieu *Royal*
Festival Hall, Kensington Gore,
London SW7 0171-589 8212

12

BBC Proms 95: Rolf
Hind, Junge Deutsche
Philharmonie
Rahmanninov, Zimmermann,
Liszt, Musorgsky orch, Ravel
Royal Festival Hall, Kensington
Gore, London SW7
0171-589 8212

13

BBC Proms 95: BBC
Symphony Orchestra
Carter*** Elgar, Brahms
Royal Festival Hall, Kensington
Gore, London SW7
0171-589 8212

13-16

The Smith Quartet:
Moving Music
Gorecki, Brites, Montague,
Alcorn, Butler, Finovski***
The Place Theatre, Dagen Road,
London WC1 0171-367 0031

15

BBC Proms 95: BBC
Singers, BBC
Philharmonic etc.
Beno*** *Madler Royal Festival*
Hall, Kensington Gore, London
SW7 0171-589 8212

15

+ 18, 23, 25
Arianna Gotti***
Royal Opera House, Covent
Garden, London WC2
0171-304 4000

16,17

1995 Colourscape
Music Festival
S Clarke, Ives, Skamton,
Leo, Nartasodho, Yooch,
Lumbrock, Gander, Glass,
Pärt *Clapham Common,*
London SW4 0181 763 9298

18,20

Jigsaw Music Theatre
present Funny Shorte
Blake*, Walton *PR RFI*

19

Psappha
Ades, Grange, Heath,
Llanas, Beamish,
Hollaway***
Soma Group Concert Hall,
Royal Northern College of
Music, Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 0161-273
45945534

20,21

London Symphony
Orchestra
Maw, Sibelius, Ravel *BH*

23

Island Symphony
Hugl*** *The Council*
Chamber, Guildhall, East Lane,
Cornwall PL33 01503 263266

23,24

1995 Colourscape
Music Festival
Wolfevitz, Guy***
Clapham Common, London
SW4 0181-763 9298

26-30

Go West Festival
Pärt, Ploughman, Lewis,
Metcalfe, Reynolds, Powers,
Butler, Reich, Riley etc.
Martin Thomas, Farnborough
College, Horsham Road, Dyffed
S461 01437 767678

27

Philharmonia
Orchestra
Maw*** *RFH 1*

28

London Symphony
Orchestra
Messiaen*, Beethoven *BH*

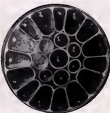
30

Brunel Ensemble
Britten, R.R. Bennett,
Bairbridge, Ravel
Clifton Cathedral, Bristol
tickets at the door

KEY:

* 4 SPNM
+ event
*** World
Première
** UK Première
* London
Première

BH: Barbican Hall,
Barbican Centre,
EC2
0171 638 8891
PR RFI: 3: Purcell
Room, SE1
0171 960 4242
RFH 1: Royal
Festival Hall, SE1
0171 960 4242



A Steel Pan photographed by
Rachel Hayward

SPNM
SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF NEW MUSIC

new notes

new notes is financially
supported by

LONDON
ARTS BOARD

FREE 17 Track CD

with the October issue of *THE WIRE*



**An essential CD of cutting edge 90s music compiled specially for
The Wire by Mute Records and featuring 17 exclusive tracks**

Artists featured include: Barry Adamson, Caspar Brötzmann, Diamanda Galas, Einstürzende Neubauten, Fortran 5, Gilbert/Hampson/Kendall, Holger Hiller, John Came, Laibach, Simon Fisher Turner, Mark Stewart, Mick Harvey, Non, Panasonic, Piquet, Plastikman and Wire

**This CD will not be available in the shops,
and will be given away FREE only with the October issue***



NR: Due to licensing agreements, we regret that this free offer will only be available to UK readers

**ON SALE TUESDAY
26 SEPTEMBER**

threatens (yes) to go off the rails, and "Cock Fight" is like "Sister Ray" played at 78 rpm. If Severe Exposure sounds suspiciously like one idea being played to death, it manages to carry it off with some panache.

Spain: The Blue Woods Of Spain

RESTLESS AN 005 CD Hugely impressive debut of mood drama. It may have a retro West Coast jazz sleeve and family connection (the singer's father is Charlie Haden), but Spain leans towards a cosmic, alternative rock interpretation of blues and soul. Josh Haden's voice fills the spaces left by the bare-boned musical accompaniment with echoes of Arthur Lee, Lou Reed and Sam Cooke. But it never lets good taste get in the way of raw emotion. "Ten Nights," "Untitled 1" and "Ray Of Light" brim with brooding soulfulness. There's nothing here particularly unorthodox or sonically challenging, but as a debut, particularly, it has an aura of rare authority and accomplishment and should be enjoyed for its mastery of music that is direct and involving.

Thirteen: Thirteen Thirteen

THIRTEEN UNION MILL UM001 CD This Birmingham trio began life as a hardcore combo producing "straight edge instrumental sounds" but they're pursuing a more dub/melodic-based, atmospheric groove (shades of Blind Idiot God). This would hold promise if the group didn't seem intent on locking into a rhythm pattern and refusing to budge from it for the duration of each track. Tellingly, these instrumental excursions were all recorded live in the studio, and their flat, one-dimensional quality suggests an unwillingness to take chances. Nothing that some experimentation with overdubs couldn't remedy. The best track here is "Mimis", where Thirteen Thirteen hold back on the echo-laden guitars (which dominate elsewhere) and allow the music to build. It also contains more unrefined hardcore/melodic elements, which might suggest it's actually what they're best at.

Yona-Kit Yona-Kit

SKIN GRAFT GR20 CD LP Improv guitars/shoos terrorists KK Null and Jim O'Rourke formed Yona-Kit as an extension of their earlier collaborations. The format is that of a "conventional" rock group — ie drums, bass, guitars. Whether this works or not

depends on your view of what a rock group should sound like. Certainly "Franken-Bitch" takes off with a suitably aggressive hardcore approach, and "Skeleton King" is pretty much avant Metal, but it's the less formulaic (in a hardcore context) tracks that stand out: the repetitive, pounding "Dancing Sumo Wrestlers" and the fluid "Desert Rose". By the closing "Slice Of Life" it's obvious that these avant garde boys remain unreformed and all the better for it. Steve Albini engineers the thing with automatic depth-charged drums and shredded guitars.

in brief opera

Nick Kimberley listens for the fat lady to sing

John Cage Europeras 3 & 4

MODE 38/39 CD Cage wrote that for centuries Europe had been shipping its operas to the Americas, and with Europeras 3 & 4, he was sending them all back. In truth, they are less opera, more whimsical and profound meditations on music, history and memory. There is no orchestra instead, the singers sing at random from their own selection of opera's greatest hits, to the accompaniment of piano and scratchy 78s of old-time opera stars. In Europeras 3, 70 minutes long and with six singers, two pianos and half a dozen record players, and with no visual stimulus, the density becomes wearing. At less than half the length, with only two singers, one piano, one record player, Europeras 4 works brilliantly, but then Cage always insisted that the two pieces (premiered in London in 1990) be performed together, so perhaps he intended to wear us out then wake us up.

Philip Glass La Belle Et Le Bête

ELEKTRA NONESUCH 7559 79347 CD Glass reckons he's on to something new take an established film classic (here, Jean Cocteau's 1945 allegory), wove the soundtrack and substitute your own, with singers voicing the script in exact synchronisation with the screen performance. It's technically impressive, and solves the problem of finding a decent libretto, but it's a bit of a dead end. Still, as the performance at London's South Bank last year showed, it works, against the odds. Cocteau's

ethereal, grainy images brought forth unexpected subtlety in Glass's vocal writing, and the total spectacle was hard to resist. Take away the film and Glass's music assumes its more usual clunk-thump character, the voices become plain, disaffected from embellishment by the spoken rhythms they imitate. Dodgy French accents don't help much either.

Berthold Goldschmidt

Berthold Cend SONY CLASSICAL S2K 66836 CD The mid-century was a pivotal moment for the Germanic opera tradition. Kurt Weill died in 1950, having proved that his European style could adapt to Broadway requirements. That same year, Arnold Schoenberg made a last vain attempt to complete his opera *Moses und Aaron*, begun in the 1930s and unfinished when he died in 1951. Also in 1950, Berthold Goldschmidt, like Weill and Schoenberg an escapee from Nazi Germany (he to London, they to the US), was at work on *Berthold Cend*. Although written in London to an English libretto (derived from Shelley), the opera is undoubtedly a German one, virtually a compendium of 20th century Germanic styles. But the traces of Strauss, Weill, Hindemith and Schoenberg coalesce into something personal, with a sky cynicism that rehumanises its tendency towards the lush and overblown. Although written for the 1951 Festival Of Britain, the opera wasn't performed in full until 1988. In this 1994 recording, the orchestra under Lothar Zagroski plays gorgeously, although the voices are less uniformly successful. But a work that should never have been lost has been found again.

Gus Janssen Noach

DOHERIS CV 42143 CD No matter what odds are stacked against them — hard to find a decent libretto, harder still to get a place in the repertoire — composers won't give up on opera. Even Pierre Boulez, who once advocated blowing up the opera houses as "the most elegant solution" to the "problem" of opera, is now writing one. And here is Gus Janssen, stretching the operatic boundaries with a work that includes Tuvan throat singers in the cast. They function as some sort of mid-point between Janssen's exuberantly inventive orchestra and his more conventionally operatic singers. The opera retells the Noah story as contemporary eco-

allegory. Despite the booklet's elaborate presentation of the (Dutch/English) libretto, I found the story hard to follow. But the recording of Pierre Audi's premiere staging (Amsterdam 1994) shows Janssen's jazzy eclecticism to be both charming and bracing.

Peter Maxwell Davies

Resurrection COLLINS CLASSICS 70942 CD More a sequence of burlesque sketches than an opera, and not that funny either. The idea for *Resurrection* dates back to the 1960s, but it wasn't completed until the 80s. As this live recording shows, Maxwell Davies's writing for orchestra is colourful, acerbic, and includes a role for a mildly punny rock group. But the vocal writing pushes the singers into overplayed grotesquery for a series of potshots at organised religion, advertising, the medical profession, revolutionary politics, the usual suspects. In the ghastly mishmash of accents (odd Northern, Welsh, mid-Atlantic) there's a touch of condescension to the working class, and that will never do, will it? The same composer's *The Lighthouse*, recently reviewed here, was subtle and eerie. Nothing subtle in *Resurrection*, and the only eerie thing is Davies's belief that his funny

Luigi Nono Intolleranza 1960

TELDEC 4509 97304 CD Nono's first opera, premiered in 1961, is aptly proper at its most vehement, and in these cynical times it may seem like empty sloganeering. Many will laugh at the idea of an opera house ringing with cries of "Death to fascism! Down with discrimination!" but Nono was utterly serious, completely passionate. The idea of taking your revolution to the opera house may not seem so daft. It has to start somewhere. *Intolleranza* doesn't have much of a story to tell. Rather it's a series of magistral, dialectical confrontations between epic symbols representing oppression and resistance to it. The unequivocal force of the voices overcomes any inclination to hear them as parodic, and Nono's orchestra is so densely violent that it makes Phil Spector's wall of sound seem like plywood. This disc, recorded in 1993, presents the opera in German translation rather than the original Italian, but conductor Bernhard Kontarsky conducts a performance full of conviction. See you on the barricades, comrades — or would you rather make it the Crush Bar? □

**ROCK
TRADE**

SHOP & MAIL ORDER 130 TELBOT ROAD LONDON W11 1JA
TEL 071 579 5844 FAX 071 581 3146
SHOP 15 HEAL'S YARD COVENT GARDEN LONDON WC2N 6HP
TEL 0171 570 5105 FAX 0171 581 2291

We stock Avenue-garde, Noise(including Japanese), Punk, Garage-Trash, Electronic noise, Kraut rock, Ambient, Tachio, indie, Sex, Pop, Jungle, OHU sound, Studio One, Electronic Beat, World Serpent, Mo Wax/Trip hop.... American, Australian, We have a 7 vinyl selection and stock all available releases on vinyl. You can now reach us on email-We can send you an online catalogue... email to info@rocktrade.com

rocktrade

please list preferred music types.
Otherwise please phone, fax or write to
the Telbot Road branch-detail see
above.

In this month's books section:

an Ambient pioneer remembered; women in music; iconic HipHop writing

Satie Remembered

Ed by Robert O'Riordan
FABER AND FABER (P/BK \$10.99)

"Although our information is false, we do not vouch for it." This typical Satieism is an apt epigraph for a collection of other people's reminiscences of the French composer, Bohemian, bon vivant, and proto-postmodernist. Given the wealth of stories about Satie's eccentricity, Robert O'Riordan's collection can't really disappoint, even if some of the anecdotes must be self-serving or apocryphal. Satie's sister Olga is to the point. "My brother was always difficult to understand. It doesn't seem that he was ever perfectly normal." You bet. Scholars have come up with the theory that he was a "higher order dyslexic or imagist", but this can't be the whole story—and posthumous diagnoses are dodgy anyway.

As a life-long friend of Debussy, Satie was in at the birth of modernism in music. Debussy — according to his friend — regarded the early piano pieces as "a revelation, so original, so different from that Wagnerian atmosphere which has surrounded us in late years." But he went on to cribase "a certain lack of form." Satie's response was to compose his *Morceaux En Forme De Poire (Pieces In The Shape Of A Poire)*. "Why such a title? Why? Simply, mon cher ami, because you cannot cribase my pieces in the shape of a pear. If they are in the shape of a pear, they cannot be shapeless."

It's true that pieces like the well-known and haunting *Gymnopédies*, written in 1888, appeared before Debussy's stylistic maturity, and the two composers became allies against the academy. But it's as proto-postmodernist that Satie is best known, and there's a strong connection with

experimentalists like Cage and Gavin Bryars — sceptics about compositional craft and the sanctity of the art object. The problem of separating technical imitation from deliberate naïveté recurs with Satie, but it's ultimately futile to pursue it. His *musique d'ameublement* (furniture music) is one of the origins of Ambient and Musak. Composer Danus Milhaud tells of a "performance" during the interval of a concert in 1920. "Contrary to our expectations, as soon as the [interval] music started up the audience began to stream back to their seats. It was no use for Satie to shout: 'Go on talking! Walk about! Don't leave!' They listened without speaking. The whole effect was spoilt."

The persona Satie created was equally remarkable — if it was a persona. Child-like yet secretive, whimsy and irony were his defences against the world. He never took paid work, and was almost always in debt. He had many friends and fell out with most of them at one time or another. When he moved out of Paris to the industrial suburb of Arcueil, no one visited his room till after he had died. As well as inches-thick layers of dust, Robert Caby relates how he found lumps of excrement, which he hastily removed so that Satie's brother shouldn't see them. He adds that, "The man who emerged every morning from this unbelievable slum was the same man we saw strolling round Paris, looking stylish, full of energy, spruce and clean."

Satie had three 'style-periods', delineated by the suits he wore. After the dandy-about-town in top hat and frock coat, he purchased seven identical velvet corduroy suits with a legacy in 1895. When they finally wore out, he became a bowler-hatted

bourgeois functionary. In this distinctive attire, he walked across Paris and — usually — back again in the early hours after missing the last train, taking very short steps and calling frequently at bistros on the way.

After the First World War, that figure became suddenly fashionable, and a hero to the neo-classical avant garde. The ballet *Parade*, with scenario by Jean Cocteau and designs by Picasso, was a triumph. But his most remarkable creation, the 'symphonic drama' *Socrate*, expresses the essential ambiguity of his style. As one friend explains, "During a rehearsal of *Socrate* in Paris he said to me: 'You see what I wanted to do. It's very simple: originality through platitude.' Perhaps he meant it." Although some of this information may be false, I'll vouch for it.

ANDY HAMILTON

She Bop: The Definitive History Of Women In Rock, Pop And Soul

By Lucy O'Brien
PENGUIN (P/BK \$12.50)

Zenigists, whatever if the recent number of books documenting women's contribution to popular music are a reliable indicator of social progress, then we can sit back, assured in the knowledge that gender, sex and economic issues are finally being addressed. Or can we? Throughout, Lucy O'Brien's meticulously researched book, we're reminded of some of popular music's truly incandescent characters — from Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday onwards — whose talents were not enough to ensure their (literal or figurative) survival. When a member of 808 State sums up his latest records as a firmament of "tinkly pianos and



Erik Satie



wailing slugs", one's hackles begin to rise in righteous indignation.

This is not, however, a woman-as-victim tome. After more than ten years writing for the music press, and delivering two decent biographies of Dusty Springfield and Annie Lennox on route, O'Brien is aware of the additional complexities that assail women in an industry which, if George Michael's tussle with Sony is reliable, shows a genderless disregard when it comes to packaging and the quick deal. For all the expressive freedom that a performer may have, the undercurrents of sexism, racism and homophobia make for difficult navigation.

Perhaps for this reason, O'Brien's history covers music in terms of genres and themes, resisting the lure of a chronological structure. This method of organisation, which bears a surface similarity to Gillian G. Gaar's *She's A Rebel: The History Of Women In Rock 'N' Roll* (1993), is a point of strength. O'Brien, whose 400-odd page book goes beyond the reach of Gaar's to embrace World Music, rap and reggae, proves to be an astute analyst of the tensions, historical or otherwise, that beset women in popular music. She is especially good on female visibility and image, an extended theme that runs through the book. O'Brien's examples provoke and distress in equal measure how, for

instance, the bodies of Karen Carpenter and Madonna shrink in inverse relation to their success, how one manager suggested to a major label press office that his (female) artist perform favours for (male) journalists. Mercifully, O'Brien avoids giving Madonna the treatment that a metanarrator deserves, and concentrates her energies on more salient factors. She recognises that the social implications of, for example, the rap vocabulary, are fundamentally more important than the endless interplay of signifiers danced out across the fabric of La Ciccone's *Gaultier* bra.

Above all, this is to be valued as a book written by an enthusiast who has not lost sight of the transformative energy that music can ignite (a rare thing in a larger music economy which trades on excitement as a commodity). It is sufficiently generous to encourage future writers and performers to hang in there and make their presence felt.

LOUISE GRAY

Bomb The Suburbs

By William Upski Wimsatt

THE SUBWAY AND ELEVATED PRESS COMPANY (Pbk \$17.00)

William 'Upski' Wimsatt is the American Jewish son of a professor, educated at Oberlin, one of the country's top private schools. Upski renounced

college education in order to pursue his love of Hip-Hop. He views Hip-hop as a stagnant force for change, a potential flag under which to unite and gather the black nation, and he is full of the urge to invigorate the music with a sense of progress. His charmingly ramshackle book, apparently self-published and full of cartoons, jokes and guest contributions, has an air of counter-culture publishing. Oz meets *The Source*.

It tackles the difficulties involved in cross-race fraternisation. He's white, and from an affluent, academic background, but involves himself with a music and a culture whose roots lie in Africa-America and the lower reaches of its economy. He's very candid, extreme even, about his pro-black feelings. For example, he writes to *The Source*, the leading US Hip-hop magazine, to ask the white editors to resign and let people of colour take over, and elsewhere he openly expresses his preference for the company of black people.

For a 22 year old, he's extremely pessimistic, mourning the death of early Hip-hop culture, the breakdancing and the graffiti from which the book's title comes. Both these elements of Hip-hop have been submerged by a music whose multi-billion dollar turnover, Upski decodes, is the reason for its

moral and qualitative descent. The state of graffiti art is used as a metaphor for the death of 'good' Hip-hop: no one does it much any more.

In a key passage, he writes "I was born biling with the wind at my back. This is the reason why I'm getting paid to write about Hip-hop, while the people who taught me about Hip-hop are in jail, dead or struggling." This is neither something to gloat over or be thankful for. It is merely a moral debt to black America.

"We may follow the example of blacks who crossover in the opposite direction, yet we must remain sober in recognising that... our struggle is not the centre of importance."

Highlights include a spat with Louis Farrakhan's son and an interview with a self-confessed rap groupie and journalist (the pairing is not a coincidence). However, after exploring the fraught area of race relations, the author's final act is a book tour through America's ghettos. Entitled 'The Bet With America', it involves Upski waging his survival in areas of extreme poverty against white America's suburban mentality. His brash mix of radical politics and idealistic solutions should see him home.

JAKE BARNES

Available from: PO Box 377653, Chicago, IL 60637, USA

multi media

Mark Espiner clicks into Obsolete's reality approximations

In the past, happenings sited themselves in specific, local spaces and drew on the ancillary creative talents of actors, musicians, film makers to generate performance art. This still happens, of course, but the power of the electronic Web to chain together niche interests on a global scale has motivated a new kind of happening. Initially, these new happenings existed in the domain of the electronic bulletin board, where people 'chatted' via the computer keyboard. Exciting initially, mundane eventually. With the further advance of the Web, it was necessary to create a new space, a creative umbrella for like minds to contribute to and even stitch together the things that they are producing: networked creativity.

Step in Obsolete, individually John Bains, James Stevens and Kim Bull, three digital nomads who all have a grounding in coding for the Web, understand its developing graphic language and are keen to create a new vocabulary in sight and sound. Don't let the name confuse you: the theory behind it is that the moment new technology is made widely available, there is already a falling off. Obsolete name themselves as such because they believe that they take the existing 'obsolete' technology and push it as far as it can go. In practice this has already led to a startling synthesis of video, sound and graphic presentation, via projects that they have been commissioned to launch into cyberspace as well as their own particular sites, and has given them a unique presence on the Web and offers some indication of how this global network might develop.

Bains was instrumental in establishing a European site for the celebrated Internet Underground Music Archive (IUMA). This came online late last year with the co-operation of the site's American founders, Silicon Graphics (the

hardware providers) and Southern Records. Via this project he met up with Kim Bull, who became a founding member of Obsolete. IUMA Europe has an identity that sets it apart from the USA site, which is loaded down with guitar-wielding indie rock groups. There is a greater proliferation of electronic music for a start, which might have something to do with Bains's own predilections: he is the editor and publisher of *Convulsion*, a Scottish electronic music fanzine whose first online edition (that is, e-zine) is out now.

Obsolete have put up the Web page RA (Reality Approximation), an umbrella site for different groups who can have a digital presence under the RA banner and draw on Bains's extensive Web weaving skills. One such group, Globo, have put an entire remix album online at RA, with the Obsolete team authoring four different data versions of each track to satisfy user impatience and hardware inadequacies there is a RealAudio version which allows instant play across the Web but at rather poor sound quality, a '30-f' version (11 KHz as opposed to a CD's 44KHz sample rate) which will take about five minutes to download, and full hi-fidelity mono and stereo MPEG encoded sound versions (MPEG is the system used for playing back digitally compressed video) which will take much longer to download and occupy a fair amount of free disk space



on your computer. Quick access to music may be, but it is not a new way of listening.

Combining animated images with soundtracks affects the understanding of the constituent parts. Obsolete are pushing the development in both of these creative disciplines, mostly via the input of James Stevens, who is experimenting with film running at two frames per second (as opposed to the normal rate of 25) to allow fast data transference over the Web, and combining these images with the music of online RA groups. A two frames per second movie is almost a slide show or slow animation, which relies on effective punctuation and comment from music to bring it to life. Most of Stevens's current pieces run for a few minutes only. The visual effect is jagged, but can either be enhanced or smoothed by the soundtrack. Obsolete have set up an open access forum called Filter which encourages digital film contributions —

some with interesting soundtracks, others just featuring dialogue, many of them can be looped for continuous play.

It is not only moving images that can be enhanced by music. The next step will be soundtracks built into the Web sites themselves. As the media elements on a Web page (video, text, pictures, voice) present themselves to the user, music will provide a running 'commentary'. This project is still a few software-upgrades away from being fully realised, but as long as it can avoid becoming a digital Muzak system, it should provide a significant expansion to the online experience.

While I talk to Bains, Stevens and Bull — digesting their ideas on linking up niche-interest groups across the globe, and looking for like minds rather than attempting to assert individual, eccentric or national identities — they are unplugging phones and computers and shifting boxes. Obsolete is on the move. They are relocating to a warehouse space in South London's Clink Street. The building already houses IUMA, HEX, and the Ninja Tune and Chill Out labels, and in a subterranean vault across the street multimedia artists Robert Wilson and Hans Peter Kuhn are preparing their new Antagel-sponsored installation (see page 20). It seems Southwark is becoming the site-of-choice for the wired Londoner. □

<http://www.southern.com/obsolete/>



david toop

turns up the heat on the sampling debate

Early afternoon sun so strong that London's Green Lanes could be Istanbul. John Wall and I are dabbling up mizze in a Turkish cafe, pushing around some ideas about the invasive impact of bullfrogs and terrapins on England's indigenous wildlife. Not too many steps separate a clutch of apparently dissimilar issues — deep greens, cane toads, the conservation of natural habitats against rampant foreign beasts, poisonous notions of national identity and creaking loyalty among humans, intellectual property and digital theft — particularly during a hot weather conversation. At that point, John asked our waiter for two glasses of water and ended up doing a Marcel Marceau with what looked suspiciously like a pint glass of invisible lager.

To me, the stimulus of immediate access to a small patch of displaced Turkey outweighs any inconvenience caused by waiters who don't speak English. The incident added a touch of realism to one of those food trough ruminations that hover on the edge of vapidity. But I realise that some of the most challenging musical discussions I have engaged in during the past 12 months have arisen out of conversations with the imposing Mr Wall. Anybody who read the recent *Wire* pieces, either on him or his new album — *Alterstall* — will know that John Wall has been belatedly banged up in the company of that genre now known as Sampling Composers. Never mind that they're all different, they all sample, some way that John Coltrane and David Bowie have both

blown air through saxophones.

When John and I talk about the moral, legal, aesthetic, financial and technological implications of sampling, we end up needing to visit outpatients to get our jaws rewired and our brains relieved. "I don't know," is the most common conclusion. "How would you feel if somebody sampled your work," he asked, which I thought was a tad ingenuous, considering the fact that a portion of *Busted Dreams* turns up on *Alterstall* (or will do, once the printers can trouble themselves to get the printing right).

I recalled speaking to Mobay, who for all his faults was sorely maltreated over his first record, "Go." One so-called cover version or remix was dubbed off the original vinyl, the only concession to any debate about moral rights or intellectual property being a minor tweak on the low-end EQ. Despite having nicked a double-whopper sized uncredited chunk of "Go" from Angelo Badalamenti, this was going a little too far for Mobay, at the time, he had my sympathy (though most of that has evaporated, thus reinforcing the theory that sampling is justified only by its creative substance, of which Mobay has turned out to possess but a small flickering spark).

John suggested a hypothetical scenario of sampling a tiny fragment of something highly repetitious, building it back up to its full length then reselling it as your own. As a conceptual exercise it's not remotely interesting, which is why he hasn't done it, but it makes you think, doesn't it? Remember the Boyle family, who made facsimile slabs of bits of road

and beach with Epikote plastic and fibreless, then exhibited them in galleries? You don't? Well there's a surprise. But I bet you remember the Plastercasters, whose sample art sourced rock star erections.

Actually, being a sample composer is not all philosophical discussion and digital plastercasting. Sample composers are united in more than one respect. A militant section among those who are sampled, for example, tends to lump all samplers together as a gang of thieves. Once flushed from their hole-in-the-wall hideouts, any one of this dastardly gang can be held responsible for the crimes of the others. So at a recent concert, Wall was backed against a wall by a venerable pre-digital age composer anxious to have a little chat with John Oswald.

There is an element of Monty Python in this. How long before John Wall has his legs broken by two exaggeratedly physical gentlemen in the pay of a highly regarded holy minimalist composer? Let us pray (as Mobay might say) that this does not come to pass. As it happens, John suffers punishment enough from the irony of living opposite a man who fits car alarms, each one of which has to be tested as it is screwed into its host vehicle.

To be honest, I am left cold by a lot of the arguments which surround sampling. In the end, there it is (as James Brown might say) in order to live myself up on the subject, I referred back to two early, largely unknown, examples of the practice. Richard Maxfield's *Bacchanale*, from 1963, which mixes samples of Korean music, flamenco and jazz

recorded live at the Five Spot with spoken poetry, underwater clarinet and typewriter, and The John Benson Brooks Trio's *Avant: Start (one PLUS 1 = 1?)*, date unknown but circa 1966-7, judging by the Carnaby Street and Haight Street signs collaged into the cover art. This latter album, an eccentric thing, samples from copyright items such as "The Magical Underwear Party (With Detachable Garters)" by Seymour Krim, "The Life I Used To Live" by Lightning Hopkins and Judy Scott's "Love Is Psychedelic". "While the lights are flo-ho-hashing crazy, we'll pick dances in the night." "I Despair a declared debt to Ornette Coleman in the jazz interludes which separate a tenuously linked narrative of spoken and sung samples, it's the sort of record you could play at one of the new Easy Listening clubs and create an impact which would make a cane toad feel unobtrusive.

I note from the back sleeve biography, a lost art if ever there was one, that John Benson Brooks wrote an electronic composition called *Bro Meets Cage* back in 1961. So ahead of his time, in fact, that if we are fortunate, we will never get to hear it. To be frank, it's an insufferable record, but all the samples are cleared and acknowledged. Maxfield, on the other hand, was so far off the map of legal obligations that sample clearance was never an issue. *Avant: Start* ends with an explosion, *Bacchanale* ends with mumbling, scraping and a quiet drone. Need I say more? □





ENJOY U2 IN H₂O

Without getting into deep water on technicalities, the Celestion MPT's are small but powerful 150 watt loudspeakers with built-in overload protection. So you see, their size may be modest but their sound is definitely grand. Making them ideal as main or additional speakers. Thanks to their rugged construction and clever stand design their versatility doesn't stop there. Not only are they splash-proof but they

can be wall-mounted, placed on shelves or angled from the floor. And their magnetic shielding means they work with hi-fi's, TV's and even computers. All in all, their sound great whichever room you're relaxing in.

CELESTION
101% SOUND

For more information or your nearest dealer:
call 01473 322225 or fax 01473 729662



MEGASTORES



lisa gerrard **'the mirror pool'**

a solo album by
lisa gerrard of
dead can dance
featuring the victorian
philharmonic orchestra
arranged and conducted
by john bonnar.

available on cd and
tape with free poster*

lisa gerrard plays the
union chapel, london
on 1st october

*while stocks last



hear it now

on virgin listening posts

from mon 14th to sun 27th aug

mega means more music+video+games